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PETER STEINFELS on the Catholic future
MARTIN MARTY on the Protestant past

To the Editors

A 'No' on Dole

I have always had the greatest respect for Sidney Callahan and she is certainly free to vote for whomever she prefers ["Dear Mr. Clinton," August 16]. I do not, however, find her arguments convincing.

With respect to the veto of the partial-birth abortion bill, it is unlikely that this legislation would have saved even one unborn child. The bill left other kinds of late-term procedures unregulated and evidence from the pre-*Roe* era suggests that a ban would never be seriously enforced. While it might have been useful to have a broader debate about the morality of late-term abortions, what we got instead was an exercise in "procedural fetishism" similar to arguments about whether electrocution or the gas chamber is the more cruel form of execution. To call the debate morally frivolous would be to pay it high praise.

Yes, Clinton is pro-death penalty. So is Dole. Clinton's judicial appointees, however, seem to take the principle of *habeas corpus* review seriously, while I suspect that Dole's "conservative" judges (his term, not mine) would gleefully deny appeals before the ink on them had dried.

I find myself confused as to which of Clinton's "military interventions" Ms. Callahan objects to. Perhaps she means the intervention in Haiti, which helped oust a brutal (and hitherto U.S.-supported) military dictatorship. Or perhaps she means the intervention in Bosnia, which helped end a genocidal war that had already claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. Of course it's hard to estimate how many lives these interventions saved, but it's a fair bet that it's more than a partial-birth abortion ban would save.

I agree with Ms. Callahan that President Clinton has been disappointing in many ways. But after watching the Republican Congress over the past two years, I hope he wins and I hope he keeps that veto pen handy.

J. PETER NIXON
Washington, D.C.

Pick your issues

I came away from reading John T. Joyce's article ["I Can't Back Clinton," July 12] with the impression that it expresses the dilemma of many Catholics. How do we take part in political activities in good conscience? Which candidates, which party ought we choose? Whatever our choice, we confront the problem of choosing which church teaching we will sacrifice.

Last night I read the Catholic bishops' pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*, and their *Call to Political Responsibility*. I saw that abortion, along with birth control, is one of many issues the bishops address. Two questions: Must we as Catholics disregard and therefore nullify all the positions on issues other than abortion taken by parties and candidates? Or do we proceed by making the best possible choices that our own consciences dictate?

I hope John Joyce votes, and votes his conscience, in November.

RUSS PATE
Dallas, Tex.

Pick your priorities

It seems, from John T. Joyce's piece, that he's damned if he does, damned if he doesn't. Supporting Mr. Clinton for re-election is wrong because the president has taken a morally wrong stand on abortion. But not supporting the president is also wrong because it would endanger the rights of workers.

Joyce tries to resolve the dilemma by asking what is more important to the cause of human rights worldwide, protecting the lives of unborn infants or protecting workers' rights. He gives clear priority to the former. I would offer the following by way of rebuttal:

(1) The economic hardships resulting from Mr. Clinton's defeat are likely to occasion many more abortions than would occur if he is re-elected.

(2) The president's stand on certain abortion procedures can be nullified by state legislation or by a Supreme Court decision, whereas his defeat will almost certainly result in infringements of workers' rights.

(3) Joyce would probably agree that there are other absolute evils besides abortion—for example, unjust wars. And he may well agree that such wars are less likely to occur if Clinton is re-elected than if he is defeated.

It follows from these and other arguments that even one who regards abortion as an absolute evil can in good conscience support Mr. Clinton for re-election.

ROGER N. HANCOCK
Portland, Maine

Adjectival inflation

Currently, I think, there is a devaluation of the word "courage" in Catholic discussions of intra-church affairs. A case in point: the letters praising the courage of Archbishop Quinn for speaking out on needed reforms—not to mention the writer who praised the pope's courage (your headline was "A heroic pope?") in calling for a reevaluation of the papacy [Correspondence, August 16].

An example of true courage could be found in the letter by Margaret Sheridan [August 16], describing the decision she and her husband made to go ahead with the birth of their baby, knowing it was doomed to die. Courage is Oscar Romero ordering the Salvadoran troops to lay down their arms, or the lone Chinese student standing in front of an advancing tank in Tiananmen Square.

So how to describe the action of Archbishop Quinn? How about "ad-

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COMMONWEAL

September 13, 1996 / Volume CXXIII, Number 15

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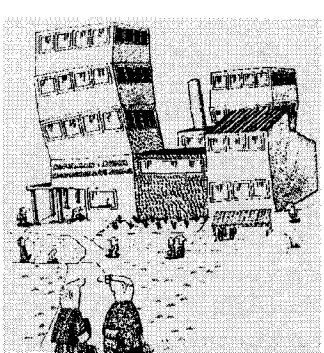

"Designed by mixed-ability architects."

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mirable" or "praiseworthy"?

PATRICK CONNOR
Bordentown, N.J.

Too flippant

I was shocked by *Commonweal*'s flippant descripton of the magnificent celebration of the Tridentine Mass at Saint Patrick's Cathedral as "mostly *malum*, but great outfits" [editorial, June 14].

Do you really consider the banal liturgies to which most of our parishes subject us today a *bonum*?

BEATRICE VON ROEMER
New York, N.Y.

A fresh thought!

It is perhaps a sign of age when one rarely encounters a new idea, but that is what happened to me when I discovered Mary Douglas's "A Modest Proposal" [June 14]. It was an exciting experience, and I must congratulate not only the author but *Commonweal* for having the wisdom to publish her article. I won't say it solves "the problem of women in the church," but for all reasonable people the proposal does make sense (besides being told with wit). Let us pray that the church authorities take heed, but, even more important, that women themselves take the steps necessary to insure that the modest proposal is implemented with haste.

MARY GORMAN GYARFAS
Durand, Ill.

A bad idea

Mary Douglas's "A Modest Proposal" is no more than a desperate stab at integrating women and "a feminine voice" into the hierarchical structure of the church. A women's commission indeed!

Without ordination and the respect accorded to deacons, priests, and bishops who make up the hierarchy, women might as well tilt at windmills. Just ask the many women who already work at lower levels in the church, or the lay men and women who worked on the papal birth control commission.

Douglas seems to feel that women priests would subvert hierarchical structures and safeguards. I doubt it. Not all women who desire priesthood also desire a discipleship of equals. Like men, they have differing views on authority and how best to exercise it.

But mostly I am disturbed that the messianic nuptial image of Christ as bridegroom and the church as bride, understood in a grossly physical way, has kept your writer from reaching the logical conclusions of her many other insights about women.

Images of God and of the church stretch our minds and hearts. They help us to appreciate on a level beyond reason. They are not meant to be literalized and certainly not to be used to limit women's access to the sacred.

ANNE DRUMMEY O'CALLAGHAN
Norwalk, Conn.

"What's all this nonsense about making some woman happy?"

Parochial complexity

Readers who content themselves with Don Wycliff's review [July 12] of John McGreevy's *Parish Boundaries* rather than reading the book itself will have only a partial idea of what the author is up to. The review stresses those arguments in the book which support Wycliff's larger point: Catholic parishes are an embarrassingly antidemocratic and racist relic of the past.

McGreevy has much more complex (and interesting) things to say about the history of Catholic parishes and race than Wycliff's review suggests. In the book's third-to-last paragraph, the author does offer some support for Wycliff's argument: "Discrimination against even African-American Catholics painfully displayed the fragility of the line between community and fortress." But that generalization is radically modified in the next two paragraphs: "...Viewed from this angle Catholics sustained faith while structuring a genuine community life. And in turn, this weaving of geography, education, and church produced a more resilient social fabric. For today's Catholics, comparable achievements in a more inclusive context would seem a worthy goal."

Wycliff's review is dismaying for those of us trying to help sustain our parishes as among the last foundations of inclusive community and cohesion left in urban America.

McGreevy's book is worthy of that struggle. The review, yet another modernist salvo against parishes, can only encourage those policy currents within the church that want to destroy them.

STEVE ROSSWURM
Chicago, Ill.

The reviewer replies:

Imagine the surprise of a traditionalist like me at being accused of issuing a "modernist salvo against parishes." If that is what Mr. Rosswurm drew from my review, either I wrote it poorly or he read it poorly.

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In good faith

Will the Catholic church in the United States enter the new millennium as a church of promise, augmented by the faith of rising generations and able to be a leavening force in our culture? Or will it become a church on the defensive, torn by dissension and weakened in its core structures? The outcome, we believe, depends on whether American Catholicism can confront an array of challenges with honesty and imagination, and whether the church can reverse the polarization that inhibits discussion and cripples leadership. American Catholics must reconstitute the conditions for addressing our differences constructively—a common ground centered on faith in Jesus, marked by accountability to the living Catholic tradition, and ruled by a renewed spirit of civility, dialogue, generosity, and broad and serious consultation.

That is the opening paragraph—and indeed a capsule preview—of the statement, "Called to Be Catholic: Church in a Time of Peril," that Cardinal Joseph Bernardin released on August 12. The statement, he said at a widely reported press conference, would guide the Catholic Common Ground Project, an initiative aimed at overcoming "an increasing polarization" and even "mean-spiritedness" that "hinders our addressing important pastoral concerns."

The response to the proposal, which has taken on a new poignancy with Cardinal Bernardin's subsequent discovery that his cancer has returned and is terminal, has been generally positive and encouraging. Yet the proposal was scarcely out of the cardinal's mouth when it was greeted with criticisms from all directions, from his fellow cardinals, Bernard Law, James Hickey, and Anthony Bevilacqua, as well as from Catholics for a Free Choice and We Are Church.

One cannot evaluate that criticism without first asking whether the analysis of our situation proposed by Cardinal Bernardin and "Called to Be Catholic" rings true. To us, it does. The hair-trigger responses to these proposals were reminders of a common phenomenon. If an idea or an initiative escapes the party lines that have become rigid three decades after Vatican II, the right suspects it of heresy, the left of capitulation. Merely hint that here and there the other side may have a point, and "How could you?" is sure to follow, accompanied by none-too-subtle suggestions that the deviant thinker is angling for praise or position from the "liberal establishment" or the "curial restorationists." Breathe the name "Charles Curran" to one side or "Cardinal Ratzinger" to the other, and the boos and hisses are positively Pavlovian. Express dissatisfaction with today's liturgies or catechetics and you are immediately pigeonholed as a devotee of the preconciliar Mass or the *Baltimore Catechism*. Open a discussion about the language we use for God and you are instantly suspected of denying the Trinity.

We do not believe that this is an atmosphere in which American Catholics can together seek answers to pressing questions about the church's future. That is why the editor of this journal has signed on to the Catholic Common Ground Project's advisory committee, joining such a diverse group as feminist theologian Elizabeth Johnson, neoconservative author Michael Novak, labor leader John Sweeney, Harvard law professor and representative of the Holy See to the Beijing Conference Mary Ann Glendon, former Democratic governor Robert Casey, and others. (For

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the full text of "Called to Be Catholic," *see Origins*, August 29; *America*, August 31; *Church*, Fall 1996; and *http://www.archdiocese-chgo.org*.)

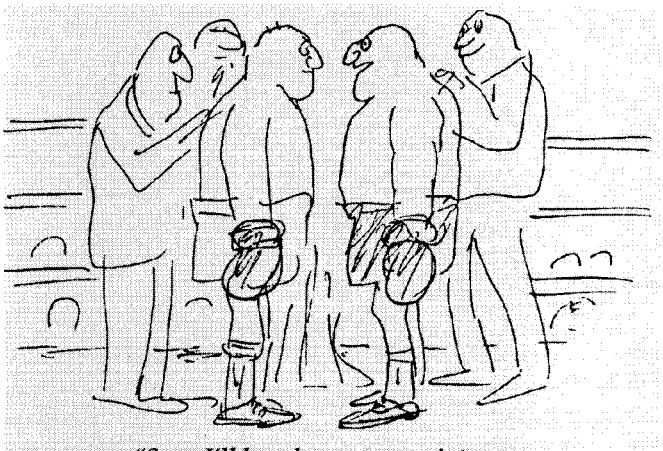
The responses of Cardinals Law, Hickey, and Bevilacqua are particularly troubling. Common ground is spelled c-o-n-f-u-s-i-o-n as far as these prelates are concerned. Seeking common ground, they warned, cannot be a back door to compromise on doctrinal matters. The truth is contained in the magisterium, and is not subject to discussion, much less revision. "Conversion," not dialogue, is the answer, wrote Cardinal Law.

Conversion certainly is the answer. But it is hard to imagine how seeking common ground among those dedicated to conversion is a betrayal of the faith with which we all have been entrusted. Even between the apostles Peter and Paul, common ground was something that had to be sought, not something authority simply imposed.

The cardinals, and some other critics too, have seriously misread both the statement and the project. They appear to imagine a series of mini-Vatican Councils under Cardinal Bernardin's auspices that would hammer out new positions on basic doctrinal questions. Naturally, to the cardinals this smacks of a usurpation. And to the organized lobbyists for change in the church it immediately poses a challenge: "How can we get a piece of the action?"

The statement, it seems to us, urges something much more modest and yet essential. It directs attention to many issues that are not directly or solely doctrinal—the effectiveness of our current religious education and of liturgical celebration, for example—even though doctrinal matters cannot be ignored in their discussion. It is less concerned with immediately resolving conflicts than with proposing ground rules (common ground rules?) that can render legitimate conflicts among Catholics constructive over the long run rather than envenomed by suspicion and rhetorical overreaction.

By launching the Catholic Common Ground Project, Cardinal Bernardin hopes to demonstrate in action what might otherwise remain fine words. But he does not claim any special status for the undertaking. The cardinal has invited other Catholic groups and individuals to read and reflect on the statement and to adopt it in whole or in part as guide for their own conversations and activities.



"Sure, I'll knock some sense into you, if you'll knock some sense into me."

Chicago—On August 30, in a jammed room where noisy film crews, reporters, and photographers jostled and lunged for pictures and soundbites, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin alone created a small bright zone of serenity as he told the world that he was dying.

Many Catholics in this country will need whatever serenity they can summon to contemplate the loss of the cardinal. As a moral teacher, whether on nuclear weaponry, abortion, or religion and politics, he has been an advocate of both complexity and consistency. As a church leader, he has been the upholder of episcopal authority and extensive consultation. As a spiritual guide, he has exemplified the prayer of Saint Francis, with which he concluded his August 30 announcement: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace."

Looking to the months that are left him, Cardinal Bernardin asked his priests and people, "Pray that I may continue to serve you in the broader church with understanding, compassion, and fidelity." We will.

MARGARET O'BRIEN STEINFELS

We recognize, of course, that there are some Catholics in both wings of the church in the United States for whom all the divisions in today's church are stark confrontations between error and truth. Respectful dialogue can, therefore, only legitimate error. We understand the logic of their position but question its wisdom or realism. "Dialogue," on occasion, has been reduced to a bumper-sticker slogan or a gambit in the politics of church authority. But it is precisely the thrust of Cardinal Bernardin's effort to insist on the necessity of dialogue—and to safeguard its authenticity.

Commonweal has tried for some time, in editorials and articles, to execute the high-wire act that the statement calls for: "reaffirm and promote the full range and demands of authentic unity, acceptable diversity, and respectful dialogue." Our readers know that we do not always succeed. Even so, enterprises such as *Commonweal*, *Crisis*, the Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church, Call to Action, the *National Catholic Reporter*, Catholic Campaign for America are often vehicles for ideas and conversations that might otherwise receive little hearing. Are some of those conversations unsettling? Absolutely. Is some of this thinking un-Catholic or unorthodox? Possibly. But ideas, conversations, suggestions, and criticisms on matters ecclesiastical and, yes, doctrinal, are not going to go away because giving voice to them is viewed by some as inopportune, dangerous, or threatening. What is needed is what Cardinal Bernardin's initiative proposes: that we listen as well as argue; that we presume good faith rather than the opposite; that we value persuasion over polemics.

The Catholic church in the United States has for too long been caught up in a stultifying standoff not only between

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groups on the right and left, but between official and unofficial initiatives, between sullen silences and shrill remonstrations. If nothing else, Cardinal Bernardin's invitation calls everyone to stop and consider what it is we are doing to the church and to the body of Christ by this internecine warfare. And for that we are grateful—even though a little bewildered that a call to discuss what ails us would be met by an effort to discredit the project before it gets off the ground. Bewildered, but not deterred.

NOTEBOOK

Robert G. Hoyt

O'CONNOR ON QUINN

The arguments don't meet

Invited to speak at Oxford, Archbishop John R. Quinn obliged with enough words to fill ten pages of this journal ["The Exercise of the Primacy," July 12]. Moved to respond, and to rebut, Cardinal John J. O'Connor preempted three pages of his tabloid-size archdiocesan newspaper, *Catholic New York* ["Reflections on Church Governance," July 25].

Now, nobody has asked me to referee this high-level dispute. Also, I don't own this magazine. So I will be brief. I agree with my cardinal archbishop on approximately three-and-a-half of the points he makes, disagree on around twenty-seven, but I'll mention none of the agreements and only one major and one minor disagreement.

The major point of variance: His Eminence's dismissal of His Grace's suggestion that "precisely because of the way issues are dealt with by the curia," certain decisions on momentous questions of church doctrine and polity—among them mandatory priestly celibacy, the ordination of women, contraception—are being "imposed without consultation with the episcopate and without appropriate dialogue," and that this state of affairs (1) is at odds with sound ecclesiology (the bishops are not mere agents of the pope but "judges and teachers of the faith") and (2) has negative impact on the prospects for unity of the Christian churches.

In my reading, this basic Quinn contention is never directly addressed in the O'Connor critique. O'Connor doesn't say, for example, that the world episcopate was in fact consulted on the issues Quinn lists, nor does he say that Quinn is theologically out of step in suggesting that they ought to have been so involved. That's too bad. I hate arguments—whether in political campaigns, familial disputes, or the church—in which the issues are never really joined.

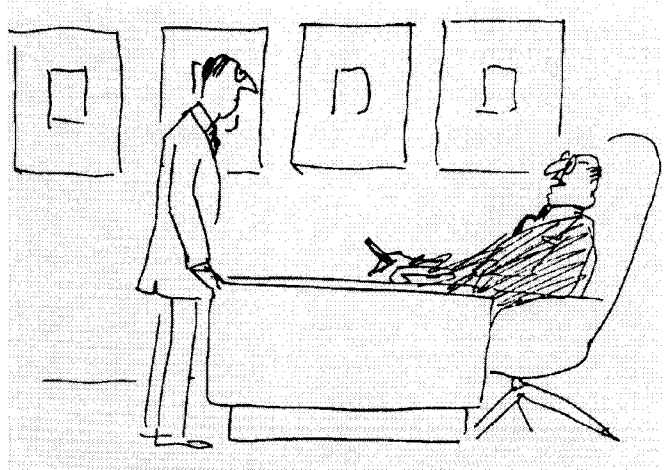
And now for the relatively minor but I think illustrative disagreement. As indicated, Quinn thinks curial control over the celibacy issue is a deterrent to Christian unity. Here is part of O'Connor's rejoinder:

"For some twenty-seven years of my life as a military chaplain, I lived and worked with married chaplains of all religious persuasions on a first-name basis, and knew their wives as good friends. We spoke very frankly on many things, including celibacy. Not once was my celibate status ever invoked by any of them as an obstacle. Indeed, I found many of them highly respectful of celibacy itself."

That passage reminded me, powerfully, of some similar words spoken with similar confidence some thirty years ago, during the Second Vatican Council of blessed memory, by a man who occupies a high place in my personal pantheon of certified good guys: Monsignor George Higgins. At a press conference in Rome, Higgins was asked his opinion of a piece published in the *National Catholic Reporter* ["Should the Council Look at Celibacy?" by "Sacerdos Occidentalis," June 9, 1965], which gave lots of now-familiar-but-then-novel reasons for answering the question "Yes." Higgins replied that in the course of his work as adviser to the U.S. bishops on issues of social justice he had traveled a great deal, frequently staying in parish rectories and taking part in late-night bull sessions dealing with all manner of churchy matters—and *never never never* had *any any any* priest *ever ever ever* raised a question about priestly celibacy. So it just wasn't an issue.

The next year, after the hullabaloo raised by Sacerdos Occidentalis had not subsided, and (I think) after sociologists had probed lay and clerical opinion about celibacy, Higgins was asked the same question in the same setting. He replied that, though his first answer had been truthful—his fellow priests never talked to him about celibacy—his conclusion was wrong: for many priests, it clearly was an issue. An honorable man, George Higgins.

In the light of this history, I could wish that Cardinal O'Connor would reflect a little further on his experience. I don't wonder that Chaplain O'Connor's married colleagues and their wives were respectful of his celibacy (so am I), nor am I surprised that none of them ever spoke of it as an obstacle to unity. Why should *his* celibacy be an obstacle? But the question of who would decide such matters, and others that Quinn had named, in what manner and by what proc-



"That's a very good suggestion, Beasley. But come and see me sometime when I'm open to suggestions."

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esses, should there ever be a move toward a greater degree of Christian unity under papal primacy, will be a matter of concern.

In any case, Archbishop Quinn did not say that celibacy is in itself an obstacle to unity, nor did he take any position on the merits of the issue. For him the problem lies rather in the absence of ongoing, structured participation by the College of Bishops in making decisions for the universal church about significant questions of doctrine and polity. To restate the issue yet again: By definition, the Roman Catholic church is not a democracy, and that is entirely borne out in its practice. By definition again (Vatican II), the church is a collegial body, and that is not at all clear in its practice.

If I were an Orthodox patriarch or an Anglican bishop or a Lutheran minister or a Methodist pastor contemplating the notion of Christian unity under papal leadership, I'd worry about that. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

JOHN GARVEY

GOD & MAN ON MARS

Spacey ruminations

When I was first able to start getting excited about anything in an independent way, what I loved most divided into two directions: mythology (the Norse kind, especially) and space travel, including science fiction. I was about seven when I designed a space ship which consisted of a huge rubber band twisted around a shaft ending in a propeller. I couldn't understand why the principle that made my balsa-wood plane fly could not, on a larger scale, get a vehicle to the moon.

When I was older and knew better I was intrigued with the possibilities suggested by earth-orbiting satellites and read everything I could get my hands on. My mother tells me that when she woke me one morning with the news that the Russians had launched the first satellite, my waking question was, "Spherical or conical?"

I read science fiction through a lot of my childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. I don't much, these days, except for the brilliant work of Philip K. Dick and Ursula K. LeGuinn (if you want to write well in this field you need K. as a middle initial). But I loved the space program throughout all of this. The photo of earth seen from the moon continues to move me.

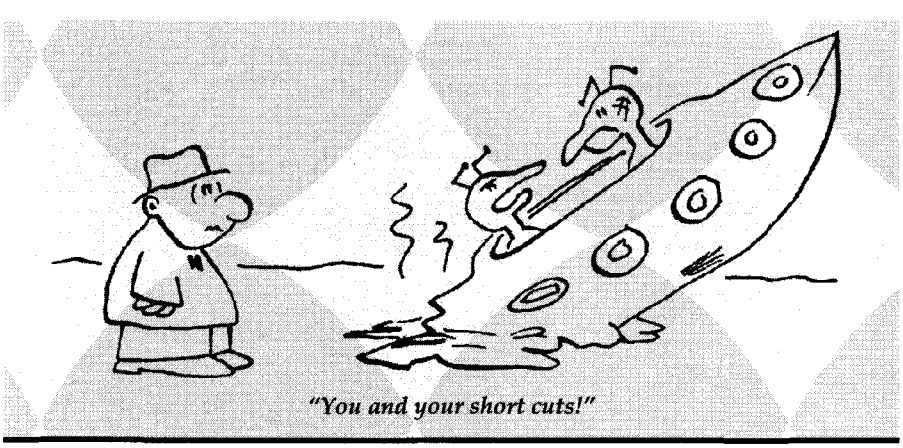
All of this qualifies me as much as anyone is qualified to address the theological implications of the possibility that life might exist elsewhere in the universe. I have never understood the problem believers are supposed to have with this.

When a fragment of rock which might have been knocked off Mars and years later landed here was found to contain a possible fossil of bacterial life, scientists were admirably cautious: the life could be (but probably isn't) a later contamination, and might not really be a fossil, but if it is, life might be something that has occurred in places other than earth.

This set off an avalanche of understandable excitement, but the statements made about its religious implications by people who ought to know better showed either a willingness to pander to secular listeners or genuine silliness. A couple of theologians of good repute, neither of them a fundamentalist, actually said that this news, if true, shows (and I quote) that "God is bigger than we thought."

You hardly know where to begin. How big, exactly, did they think God was? Remember a few years ago, when God said that he would kill Oral Roberts (well, this is what Oral said God said) if Oral didn't come up with enough money for one of Oral's projects? God was, if I remember right, about as tall as three football fields stood on end. This is the only recent sizing up of God that I can recall, until now.

Of course if there is life elsewhere, life possessing the sort of intelligence we are capable of understanding, it does invite some intriguing thoughts. Would they experience the world as a fallen place, as we do? Is there a fundamental error built into the whole universe, or does what we know as the Fall happen regionally, and not everywhere? We are so far from needing an answer to these questions that this sort of thinking is still, in some sense, idle; but it is hardly new. Our modern view of other lives, and other kinds of intelligent life, is not nearly as rich as that of the ancient and medieval worlds. It is only since the Renaissance that we have slipped into a rather boring, two-tiered view of the uni-



"You and your short cuts!"

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verse, in which there is a material world in which humans are the only intelligent life, and then there is God, who may or may not exist.

Our ancestors lived in a world in which there was God, as well as angels, demons, djinns, and those other strange beings, fairies, leprechauns, creatures inhabiting glades and lakes, and tales of whole cities that flicker in and out of existence or rise from the waters....It could be that we grow excited about the possibility of life elsewhere because we have lost this world, and something in us needs it.

Although it is true that our ancestors believed these other kinds of life all inhabited this particular planet, the planet itself was bigger, multi-valent, and mysterious. None of this, however, has to do with how big God is, but with the narrowness of our ordinary ways of looking at the universe. The idea of a God "bigger than we thought" implies that we can have an idea of God in the first place, and this is to be avoided. We believe in the God revealed in Scripture and in the experience of the church, but this is not a God with a size. It is a God who revealed himself as unknowable, and then became flesh to show us that love means the cross, and that death has been overcome in resurrection. It is this God whose "center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere," to quote Pascal. Or, to quote another philosopher, Wittgenstein, "It is not *how* things are in the universe that is mystical, but *that* it exists."

If those theologians who spoke of God being bigger than we thought meant no more than that this discovery offers us one more reason to wonder, they could not have chosen a more unfortunate way to express the idea. It may be a reaction to Galileo or the Scopes trial: they want to show that Christians don't always react as if their core beliefs had been threatened. But by offering the notion of a God who expands with our discoveries they threaten a truly core belief: God's essence is truly unknowable, and the mere fact that we draw our next breath, or can know anything at all, is more profound a miracle than life on Mars. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

A CIVIL TONGUE

May this House come to order

Those lamenting the decline of comity in our culture range from Norman Lear on the left to Ernest Lefever on the right. In an op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* some time ago, Lear, founder of People for the American Way, listed the problems in our society and drew a parallel with the fall of Rome. Rome fell, he said, citing historian Lewis Mumford, not because of political or economic ineptitude, or because of the barbarian invasions, but because of a "barbarization from within." One aspect of that barbarization in our midst is apparent in "the harshness and ugliness that have entered Western civilization," now more pronounced than ever, as Lefever of the Ethics and Public Policy Center told the *Baltimore Sun*.

Thus harshness affects us all in our daily lives. Each morning we must steel ourselves for the unpleasant encounters the day may bring: The lane jumpers making the daily commute perilous; drivers cutting past and making obscene gestures; the cacophony of horns if one slows for any reason; the jockeying for a place in the parking lot; surly attendants first, then indifferent waiters and clerks later—irritations too numerous to mention. Rudeness has become the norm rather than the exception. Common courtesy and an appreciation of the rights of others seem to have disappeared from American life.

And worse, this harshness and ugliness affects the way in which the laws that govern our lives are made. When, this year, Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole left his beloved Senate to campaign, he spoke with feeling in his farewell about his friendships with many Democratic senators over the years—senators like Hubert Humphrey, Philip Hart, and George McGovern. There was a time when such bipartisan friendships were usual, when legislators

FELLOWSHIPS AT THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF VALUES IN PUBLIC LIFE
HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL, 1997-98

The Center for the Study of Values in Public Life at Harvard Divinity School invites applications from scholars and practitioners to be in residence for one semester or one academic year. Fellows will pursue research projects that recognize religious beliefs and practices as important elements in the current debate about civil society and the renewal of public life; participate in an interdisciplinary seminar involving senior scholars and practitioners; and convene a student working group around a central issue in one's area of expertise. Participants' stipends vary depending on individual circumstances and ordinarily do not exceed $30,000 for a full-year Fellowship (or $15,000 for a one-semester Fellowship); home institutions are expected to provide additional support, plus all benefits. Deadline date for receipt of applications is **December 20, 1996.** *To receive an application cover sheet, please contact*: The Center for the Study of Values in Public Life, Harvard Divinity School, 45 Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138 (*telephone*: 617-496-3586; *fax*: 617-496-3668; *e-mail*: cmcintyre@div.harvard.edu).

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with opposing views could debate and then leave the chamber arm and arm. It was a healthy state of affairs because, as has been so often said, politics is the art of compromise. The legislation resulting from such amicable and reasonable debate benefited from the best thoughts on both sides of the aisle.

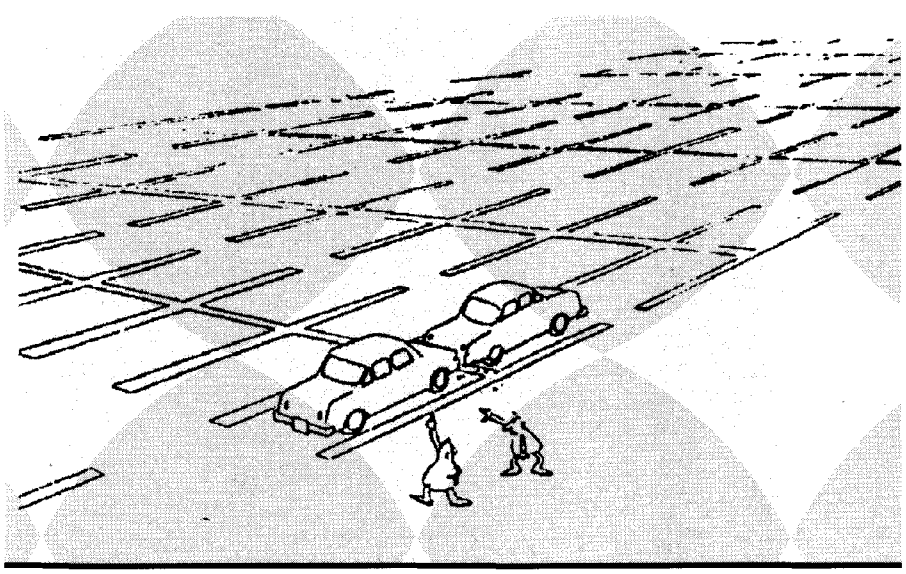
Unfortunately, bipartisan friendships like those recalled by Dole are now a thing of the past in both the House and the Senate. Newly elected members often have hardened ideological views and no previous legislative experience. They tend to treat members of the opposite party like enemies rather than as colleagues with differing opinions. Debate is rancorous. Despite the rules of both houses of Congress requiring courtesy, it is no longer unheard of to witness members shouting, imputing chicanery, and calling names. Fourteen senators—among them some of the most able and distinguished—are leaving the Senate this year. This is the greatest number in 100 years. Some are leaving for reasons of health and age, but most because the atmosphere in which they serve is poisoned with animosity. Many House members are leaving as well for the same reason.

In the House, many of the members remaining are beginning to seek remedies. One who has long sought to restore civility and has been a lone voice pleading for its return is Republican Congressman Amo Houghton of New York. It is his belief that better legislation would again be achieved if his colleagues cooperated when possible instead of attacking one another. "Screaming works, short term," he said in an interview in the *Washington Post* this year, "but if you want to get something done you have to perceive what the other person thinks."

Lately, according to columnist David Broder, Houghton has been joined by Democratic Congressman David Skaggs of Colorado and Republican Ray LaHood of Illinois. They have proposed that all members of the House of both parties, and their spouses, take a few days early next year to get to know one another. The days would be designed to restore a sense of fellowship to a very divided Congress where communication between members of the opposing parties has completely broken down. Skaggs and LaHood, in turn, have been joined by about a dozen other members in signing a letter to Speaker Newt Gingrich and Minority Leader Dick Gephardt asking that they plan now for such a post-election session.

Another effort to combat the prevailing incivility was launched by retiring Congressman Anthony C. Beilenson (D-Calif.). There is a tradition in the House that each day begins with a series of one-minute speeches. Until recently, these speeches were given by members to announce bills they intended to introduce or to call attention to events in their districts and the achievements of various constituents (such achievements might range from a hundredth birthday to developing a new variety of cabbage). But of recent years the one-minute-speech sessions have become an occasion for the trading of hard-edged political attacks, an acrimonious start to the legislative day. Congressman Beilenson enlisted the cooperation of a senior Republican, Bill Archer of Texas, to transfer the one-minute speeches to the end of the day.

They organized a bipartisan group of fifty members to write to Speaker Gingrich asking for this change, a change they agreed would "be an important step toward restoring dignity and civility in the House." "These brief speeches," they continued, "have become a series of sound-bite assaults, often prepared not by the members themselves but by Republican and Democratic political staff who have found this format to be highly conducive to the kinds of attacks that used to be reserved for campaign commercials." Putting the speeches at the end of the day would allow people to see the House as actually engaged in legislative work and looking like "a legislative body composed of thoughtful people who are able to debate issues and express disagreement in a dignified and polite manner." The writers hope that the public could once again see Congress as such a disciplined and responsive body. Leaving the contentious speeches to the end of the day would mean fewer viewers of C-Span and, quite likely, fewer tired lawmakers hanging about to make the speeches.



These proposals are modest at best. Those of us alarmed and dismayed by the prevalent incivility in our society may well wonder if, put into effect, they would make the desired difference in the present poisonous climate in Congress. They are yet to be agreed to by the leadership, which unfortunately itself remains part of the problem. But change must start some place. If change is achieved in the now deeply divided body that is of such importance to us, we can hope that other institutions like community governments and schools will make similar efforts. Change might creep gradually through the whole society. Above all, it must be attempted. □

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THE SECOND TIME AROUND

On the way to the altar

Kevin Kane

It was a second marriage—for both the bride and the groom. He was nervous and she was four months pregnant—and beginning to show, as they walked down the aisle of Holy Trinity Church on 82nd Street in Manhattan to be joined in holy matrimony. The pregnancy was a product of her first union.

The bride wore a knee-length cotton print and the groom wore a freshly ironed Oxford white. His mother stood up as the matron of honor. An assistant pastor was the hastily found best man.

The marriage was presided over by the Reverend Monsignor Thomas Leonard. The bride wept as she spoke vows that she had made once before. The groom was surprised to find that he was weeping too. The priest wore a white cassock and a gold-colored stole. The vows were the standard office of marriage from the back of the sacramentary. The priest read from one of Saint Paul's letters to the Corinthians. Then he blessed the rings. And pronounced the couple husband and wife.

The ceremony was sparsely attended—in fact the church was empty. The deleterious effect that had on wedding gifts was offset by the rather grand echo that the empty church produced. It gave a resounding emphasis to the vows and to the priest's final pronouncement. That both participants had made those promises before gave the echo a somewhat appropriate ring.

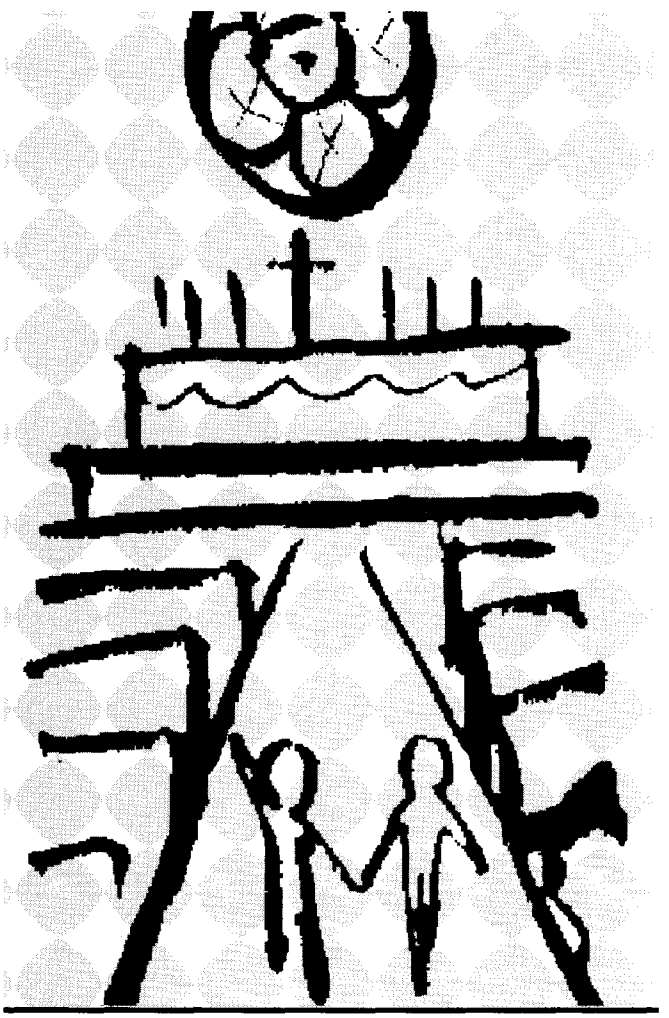
After the service, the bridal party (*sans* the best man) walked down the aisle to a tune of Mendelssohn's, hummed low in three parts, at least one of them off-key. The party marched out the front door of the church and kept going, ending up at a sidewalk cafe on Upper Broadway where they sat for a post-nuptial breakfast of French toast and iced coffee. An Australian waitress, in the city just for the summer, was pressed into service as the official photographer.

That wedding was mine and my wife's. And it was worth celebrating. The French toast and the iced coffee tasted particularly good. Not that our first marriages hadn't worked out well. They had. We had been married to each other.

We had been joined that first time in a more civil service—watched over by a large crowd of family and friends that would be well-fed and hard-danced before the day was done. We took those vows in a nonsectarian chapel, officiated over by a divorced Jewish woman who was a Unitarian minister, vested with the power of the state. A reverent and inspiring person she was, who gave us good counsel as we set out in married life. Nothing to complain about there. The ceremony was meaningful, well-photographed, reverent, emotional—and seemed to take a good hold. So why were we standing in a dark and empty Catholic church a year-and-a-half later, repeating largely the same vows?

When we were starting to make plans—the first time—I talked to a priest I didn't know, in the parish I had grown up in, about getting married in the church. Though I had moved to New York City eight years before, and was only getting to Mass four or five times a year there, it still seemed like the natural place for me to begin. It didn't work out.

My wife's not a Catholic and has no plans to be. Her family isn't affiliated with any particular religion and the thought



Kevin Kane *is a playwright living in New York.*

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of explaining to those confirmed agnostics why we were going to be married in a Catholic church made me uneasy.

We found many other reasons not to bother getting married in the church. All of them seemed like good ones, but mostly it was just that—it would be a bother. There would be the banns of marriage to be announced, and maybe a weekend retreat or two. We had heard that my wife might have to profess to things she didn't believe in. That turned out to be untrue, but we had heard it said and so we of little faith believed it. The church I had grown up in before the ecumenical movement was demanding and I have to admit I was intimidated. Finally, the priest I talked to back in Connecticut told us we should be married in the parish we were active in, where we lived. One thing we did know was that we wanted to be married in Connecticut. We could have lied about where we lived. But that seemed a bad way to start off a life together.

The Unitarian minister was available and the chapel we chose was beautiful—and small enough that we could overflow it with guests. There was a pipe organ and a Tiffany rosette window over the altar and a long aisle to walk down. We could write our own vows—we liked the idea of that and we came up with words that sounded somewhat like the ones I'd always heard in the Catholic church. Close enough, I thought at the time.

Something was missing for me though. I continued to drop into Mass occasionally. I made visits once in a while in the middle of the week. Not looking for anything in particular, just trying to keep up a connection. Then about five months ago I was riding my bicycle past Holy Trinity on 82nd Street and I got that urge to drop in and say hello. I was locking my bike to the front gate of the rectory when the pastor, Monsignor Leonard, stuck his head out and asked if he could help me.

"Sure," I said, and then before I knew it I was telling him "it's been about two years since my last confession." Sometimes fast and dirty is the best way to make things happen.

"Come on in," he offered and I did. We talked. I mentioned that I was married and that my wife was expecting a child in September. And he suggested that before he heard my confession, maybe I should talk to my wife about getting our marriage blessed, sacramentalized he called it. He said he thought it would be the best way to begin reconciliation. And that new name for confession suddenly made more sense to me than it ever had before. So I went home and I talked to my wife and we decided. I was going to get right with the church. And we were going to get married again.

The hardest thing I had to do, besides examine my conscience, was to find our civil marriage license. We didn't need to post banns or study religion. Father Leonard talked to us both one morning, to help us understand what we were doing and that was that. My wife has no problem with what my faith is and had no problem saying that I was welcome to pass that faith on to our children. The church is very accommodating and kind to its wandering souls, at least on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

So what was different a year-and-a-half later that sent us to the priest on 82nd Street to have our marriage sacramentalized? Not the church. And not our love. But there was something I wanted, something that doesn't come from within us. Something my conscience told me was missing. And something I felt the state couldn't confer.

Marriage is a structure for a couple to work within, a firm and a resilient framework to hang your hopes on. More and more I am finding that my faith in the church provides me with a similar framework. Both marriage and faith lean on order, on tradition, and on a belief in something greater than oneself. The sacraments, I was taught, are outer signs of God's inner working, and the sacrament of marriage, in particular, is a sign of God's love as part of our own. It's a blessing, and I think that was what I felt missing. That blessing.

My marriage is everything I had hoped for and more. The one thing it's not is easy. It isn't playtime, it's hard work and the joy from it comes at great cost. It is truly a pearl of great price. And I want to get everything I'm paying for. I want the biggest and the hardest rock I can find to stand upon. And I think that rock is the church that Peter built. Because too often love is shaky, fear is real, words are not enough, and the state is uncertain.

Unlike the state, the church does not pretend to be our equal or a consensus of ideas. It is more than we are. And I want more than we are to be holding this particular marriage together. Because love and my commitment may someday prove inadequate. I want the church's love, which can be more lasting and more powerful than mine or the state's, because it's a church made up of men and women, but not made by men and women. It's a church made up of people who build on a rock. People who plant mustard seeds and raise mighty things. Which is what I want to do.

Being married, and expecting to bring a child into this world, have taught me a lot. I find that I don't trust myself as much as I did when I didn't know myself quite as well. I feel better now, with the church's blessing, and I think my wife does too—having entered into the same bond of marriage that my grandparents and their grandparents and their grandparents before them entered into. Because that's what got me here. Hundreds of years of faith and common prayers and common tradition.

It was scary going back and asking for the church's blessing. Because I was the one who had decided against a church wedding in the first place. I was nervous in asking. I didn't even know that's what I was going to do the day I rode up on my bike. I shouldn't have been nervous. I know that now, having done it. Because it was easy.

Before receiving the church's blessing on our marriage, I confessed my sins. And let me tell you, they were no small sins either, but I have to suppose that Father Leonard had heard worse, because what I had to report didn't seem to faze him a bit. That was easy to do too and he forgave me, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Then he married us. And it was like going home. □

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THE ANNULMENT GAME

Let's pretend

Marian E. Crowe

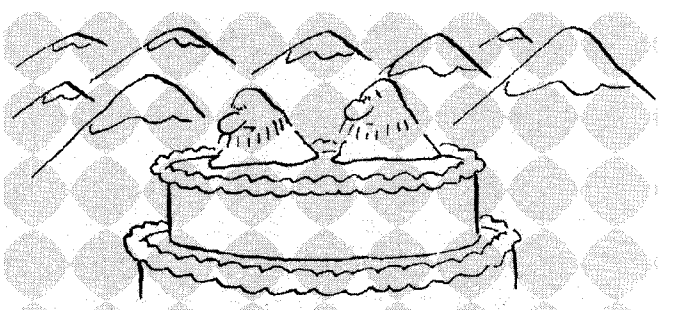
I am a divorced Catholic. I also have an annulment and am remarried in the church. In spite of this happy resolution in my own life, I believe the church's present policy on annulments is causing distress to many serious, well-informed, and loyal Catholics. For some, it creates a crisis of faith; for others it initiates tension and intellectual conflict that ultimately drive them from the church. Still others feel that it asks them to compromise their integrity, a compromise they are unwilling to make. I am *not* referring to those who are afraid they cannot get an annulment, or to those who shrink from such a technical and legal approach to what they experience as a deeply personal and emotional pain. No, I am concerned here with people who *do* understand the process and are willing to undertake it, but who nonetheless are troubled by what the church is saying concerning the annulment process and feel it is finally dishonest.

The difficulty starts with the word itself: annul. The word derives from the Latin *annulare*, to make [into] nothing. But in what sense does an annulment declare a marriage to have been a nothing? The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* notes that if consent was impaired by coercion or fear, or if there were other reasons that could render the marriage null and void, then the church "can declare the nullity of a marriage, i.e., that the marriage never existed." The *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (HarperCollins, 1995) adds that an annulment does not say "that a marriage never existed between the parties, but only that the marriage was not a canonically valid one (in church law, a marriage which is *de facto* invalid which was entered with at least one party being in good faith, is known as a 'putative' marriage...)." But according to *Annulment: Your Chance to Remarry within the Catholic Church* by Joseph Zwack (Harper & Row, 1983), "an annulment declares that there never was a valid union, despite appearances to the contrary." As in much of the current literature on the subject, Zwack places a great deal of weight on the concept of sacrament. Thus, he writes that "an annulment does not dissolve a marriage. It simply means that in the eyes of the church there never was a *sacramental* marriage at all" (emphasis added).

But the terms *valid, canonical, putative, sacramental* not only fail to clarify the issue for most people, but seem to obfuscate it. To the popular mind, the Catholic church, by granting an annulment to John and Betty—who were legally married for twenty-two years, had four children, suffered through a difficult pregnancy, a critical auto accident of one of their children, and the deaths of two parents—is saying they were never *really* married. But when challenged with the absurdity of such a notion, the defenders of annulment invoke the concepts of sacramentality and canonical validity.

Again, according to the *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, "A marriage may be invalid according to the church for one of two reasons: because of a law, or because of a consent that was in some way defective." Various impediments make a marriage invalid by law: a prior bond, abduction, holy orders, or impotence. Failure to observe the proper forms, such as not marrying before two witnesses, can also render a marriage invalid by law. In Catholic teaching, sacramentality is linked to validity. An article titled "Why the Church Is Granting More Annulments" in the *Catholic Update* series, (Saint Anthony Messenger Press), says that "any valid marriage between baptized persons, Catholic or Protestant, is a sacrament as well as a natural bond." But the term sacrament proves to be problematic, particularly when it is invoked to justify an annulment.

The *Catholic Update* article explains that "a declaration of nullity is a judgment by the church that what seemed to be a marriage never was in fact a true marriage." It states that "church law today reaffirms the personal relationship, the intimate partnership between the spouses, as a crucial, basic dimension of marriage." Furthermore, an essential part of the sacramentality of a marriage is the quality of the consent at the time of the wedding. What happened afterward in the relationship is important, but only as it sheds light on the state of mind of the two people at the time they were married. That is why, after investigating the matter, the church insists that a valid or sacramental marriage never



"You're right—this is a wedding cake!"

Marian E. Crowe *teaches in the Freshman Writing Program at the University of Notre Dame.*

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Edward Higgins

Eve's Body

It was her mind
the Devil
desired most.
Really.

Lust had long ago
gone rigid
in his one-track
mind.

But he could see
Adam's steady
attachment.
And lust's echo,
even attenuated,
accused his leaden
manhood.

So into the ear
of Eve's body—
at once columned
like a boy's or
a bare Greek
temple—

he whispered
the tallness
of knowing:
And lines once solid
foundered, undulating
into pale curves

& smooth surfaces
even a Devil's mind
could curse
for their
distraction.

existed: "A declaration of nullity is granted when it can be shown that some essential or juridical defect made a particular marriage invalid *from the beginning* despite outward appearance, despite even the good faith of the partners or the establishment of a family" (*Catholic Update*).

But if matrimony is one of the seven sacraments, it must share certain fundamental characteristics with the other six. Baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, and the others are considered to be sacraments if the proper matter and form are present. This includes that the proper rite is used and the minister acts with the correct intention. Although the sacraments "do not cause grace magically," as Richard McBrien points out in *Catholicism*, and the reception depends on one's disposition, the common understanding among most Catholics is that if the proper procedure is followed and the minister and recipient have the proper intention, the grace of God is present and the sacrament is conferred. Is baptism not a sacrament if the infant does not have the conscious intention of being baptized? Is confirmation not a sacrament if the thirteen-year-old in the pew is there because his parents told him he had to attend all the Monday-night classes and be confirmed with the other thirteen-year-olds, and that he really didn't have a choice about it? Does the distracted young mother who approaches the altar, her mind filled with the chores waiting for her at home, and who mindlessly swallows the eucharistic bread, not truly receive the sacrament?

Most Catholics would insist that such instances do constitute sacraments. But the sacrament of matrimony—as it is described in the current literature on annulment—seems to be of an entirely different order. Here, as in holy orders and adult baptism, validity is linked to the nature of consent:

> Consent must be free and discerning. External or internal pressure, which significantly reduces freedom or undermines critical judgment, could impair consent to such a degree that common-sense requirements for such a binding decision as marriage are not fulfilled....[Also] both partners must have the maturity to establish and sustain a mutually supportive communal relationship with one another (*Catholic Update*).

What other sacrament is dependent for its validity or sacramentality on such tenuous, intangible, and psychologically complex factors? Furthermore, if the only people who are validly, sacramentally married are those whose choice was perfectly free, who completely understood what marriage is and what it entails, then very few—if any—were sacramentally married at the time they exchanged nuptial vows.

Although I am not a theologian, the distinctions concerning sacramental and canonically valid marriage invoked in the annulment process strike me as mystifying and even offensive. Ask the children of divorced parents who are seeking annulments what they think about it. They find it hurtful. No matter how patiently and carefully one goes over the civil

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marriage/sacramental marriage distinction, basic good sense, honesty, and primordial family loyalty rise up in revolt when children learn their parents were never sacramentally married. It is not that they necessarily want to see the parents together: In many cases they sincerely believe that the divorce was for the best. But they are offended by the declaration that their parents were not *truly* married.

Many Catholics remember being taught, clearly and definitively, that a marriage could be ended only by death. Although some clear impediments could annul a marriage, these were so rare and peculiar that they did not ordinarily apply. Today, however, according to Zwack, "in many jurisdictions, more than 95 percent of the petitions [for annulment] accepted for consideration are ruled upon favorably." The increased frequency of annulments heightens the sense that the sacrament of marriage is singled out for peculiar treatment, and that unlike most sacraments, it is unduly dependent on the disposition of the recipients at the time of reception. But in keeping with the way we usually think of sacraments, would it not be consistent to say that there was indeed a sacrament, but that ultimately it was not fruitful?

It is true that the strict practice of the pre-Vatican II church with regard to divorce and remarriage left many people trapped in miserable marriages; and if they separated, there was no hope of remarriage within the church as long as the first spouse was alive. In its present practice of granting annulments, the church seems to be trying to be pastorally humane, allowing Catholics a way to disengage from hurtful, destructive marriages, to have a second chance at marital happiness and still remain in full communion with the church. Bishop Walter Kasper, writing in *America* (February 10, 1996), acknowledged a "split between official teaching and pastoral practice" in regard to divorced and remarried Catholics receiving the Eucharist. That same split is evident in regard to the church's position on annulment. The church desires to be humane and compassionate, but its need to be consistent and coherent is paramount. This dilemma, I submit, is the genesis of the murkiness that surrounds the annulment issue, its repudiation by many Catholics, and the incredulity and stupefaction it elicits from others.

The annulment process itself, however, can, as many will testify, be healing, clarifying, and therapeutic. In requiring divorced Catholics to undertake such a challenging process before the marriage is declared null, the church sends an important message that marriage is not to be undertaken lightly, and that before one approaches the altar it is imperative to look into one's own heart and enlarge as far as possible one's understanding of the reasons for the first failure. This is a message that the world-at-large would do well to consider. I am proud of the church for taking marriage so seriously.

I had thought about these issues when the time approached that I would be eligible to apply for an annulment (six months after the granting of the legal divorce). I sought the advice of a priest whom I very much respect. He agreed with me that the church's pastoral practice seems out of sync with its doctrinal statements. He encouraged me to begin the process only if I felt I could do so without compromising my integrity.

Although I had some reservations, I decided to go ahead with the annulment. I feel a love for and loyalty to the religious tradition which nurtured my faith. While I had no plans to marry again, I hoped that I might, and I wanted to have my options. I also believed that the process would help me achieve insight and closure.

When I began it I was not dating anyone. By the time the annulment was granted, a year later, I was engaged to a divorced Catholic who had received an annulment a year-and-a-half previously. We were married at a nuptial Mass and were gratified that we could witness to the possibility of divorced persons being married within the Catholic tradition and with the loving support of fellow Catholics.

Again and again I have heard Catholic friends who have sought an annulment say with resignation, "Of course, I was married. I would never say I was not. But the church says I must do this if I wish to remarry in the church. So I will do it." Although the literature on annulment is very insistent on the point that annulment is by no means "divorce, Catholic-style," that is, in fact, what it is. The church must be more explicit and honest about the extent to which its annulment policy represents a change.

Of course the church *has* changed her mind before. History provides numerous examples: usury, slavery, and religious freedom, among others. Can it do so in regard to the indissolubility of sacramental marriage? Some theologians now argue that Jesus' prohibition of divorce should be interpreted as an ideal rather than a literal and absolute ban, but this is still not the church's teaching.

So today, when the church declares that a sacramental marriage never existed in a specific case, many—including the participants themselves—are skeptical. They need support and guidance as they try to live up to the ideal of Christian marriage in a culture that militates against it. But they also need help in rebuilding their lives when those attempts fail. Yes, *fail*. Because that is what such marriages are—failures—not marriages that never really were.

This is not a trivial argument over semantics, but a serious plea for an end to language that many divorced Catholics, their children, and loved ones find humiliating, embarrassing, and patently untrue. Much about the present annulment process is good. But in too many cases it has forced those involved in it to act disingenuously. The church's teaching and practice ought to reflect the truth that divorced remarried Catholics already know: We worship a compassionate God who does not exclude us from the joy of fulfilling married love, despite the fact that we tried and failed before. God not only allows us to try again, but is our loving support as we try to make our lives an imitation of perfect love. □

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THE POLLSTERS LOOK AT U.S. CATHOLICS

And are all too cheerful about their findings

Peter Steinfels

Happy the historian who, fifty years from now, sets out to portray the American Catholic church in the last decades of the twentieth century and discovers *Laity, American & Catholic: Transforming the Church* (William V. D'Antonio, James D. Davidson, Dean R. Hoge, and Ruth A. Wallace; Sheed & Ward, $15.95, 196 pp.).

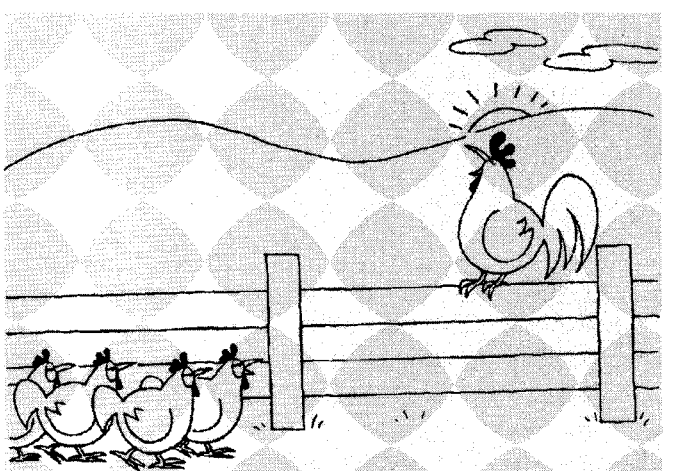
She will, to begin with, light upon a stash of useful data about the views of the *fin de siècle* American Catholic laity. But equally important, she will find a book that is itself an important bit of data: a pristine specimen, preserved like a mosquito in amber, of the ideological outlook that animated much of what was then (that is to say, now) called progressive Catholicism.

That outlook informs Call to Action, We Are Church, the Association for the Rights of Catholics, Catholics Speak Out, Corpus, and any number of other groups on the church's left. It is the outlook that ripples through the American news media's approach to Catholicism and that shapes much of the coverage of the American church's major independent source of news, the *National Catholic Reporter*.

Laity, American & Catholic is, in fact, a summary and analysis of that paper's 1993 national survey of lay Catholics. It was designed by the authors and carried out by the Gallup Organization. An earlier book, *American Catholic Laity in a Changing Church* (Sheed & Ward, 1989), reported on a similar 1986 poll. Taken together the two polls show:

- American Catholics are increasingly unwilling to give unqualified assent to official church teachings on marriage and sexual morality. More and more Catholics believe either that they alone should determine what is right or wrong, using church teaching simply as a helpful guide, or that the determination of right and wrong must emerge from some unspecified interaction between individual judgment and church authority.
- American Catholics are increasingly disinclined to insist on clearcut standards for being "a good Catholic," notably such positive criteria as regular Sunday churchgoing, getting married in the church, believing in papal infallibility, and donating time or money to the parish or Peter's Pence; or such negative criteria as not remarrying after divorce, not employing artificial contraception, and not getting abortions.
- Weekly Mass attendance remains respectable but decreasing. Same for daily prayer. Same for how important a place that Catholics say the church has in their lives.
- American Catholics increasingly believe that they have a right to participate in decisions about parish budgets, choosing their priests, and shaping the church's teachings on divorce, birth control, and the ordination of women. The latter they increasingly favor along with the ordination of married men.
- Most Catholics believe it highly unlikely that they would ever leave the church. (The skeptical observer, looking at their relaxed standards for membership, might ask, "Why should they?" The cynical might wonder "How would they know?")

These findings are hardly news, but they are anything but insignificant. They do not represent, as some conservative Catholic leaders keep telling themselves, blips or spikes in a fluctuating course of opinion but massive and steady trends. Nor, as an even greater number of conservatives would like to believe, do they represent the views only of fringe or marginal Catholics. A convincing chapter on the responses of "The Most-Committed American Catholics" shows that among this group the same shifts in regard to church teachings and demands for lay participation are steadily occurring. A certain kind of tightly structured church, with precisely articulated doctrines, clearly differentiated roles,



"Apparently this guy has some sort of agenda."

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detailed codes of conduct, and sharply delineated boundaries, is passing into history. It would be foolhardy to suppose that it could be restored by an act of will or authority, at least not without a loss of members on a scale that would make the Reformation look mild.

But no less a sign of the times than these findings is the polar framework the authors use to formulate their study and interpret their results: A church that is democratic, egalitarian, open, embracing, tolerant, innovating, lay-led, diverse, and affirmative of American values is pitted against a church that is autocratic, hierarchical, dogmatic, discriminating, clerical, monolithic, and committed to a European past.

Given that choice, it is not surprising which side the authors are on. Which side would almost anyone, save a few incorrigible curmudgeons and devotees of the Syllabus of Errors, be on? The authors momentarily acknowledge that their either/or framework "oversimplifies real complexities," but it is a price they are willing to pay to emphasize "a fundamental polarity." So where others, including many committed to an open, more democratic church, might find a considerable mixture of good news and bad news in these findings, the book, with only the faintest dusting of caveats, argues that the state of the Catholic laity is essentially sound and its views in keeping with the best of a rather unproblematic set of American values. (The book's rendition of recent changes in American family life, for example, is neutral to upbeat, mentioning women entering the work force, the trend toward smaller families, and greater acceptance of interfaith marriage but nothing about divorce, domestic violence, or illegitimacy.) Clearly the authors feel that the church's presumably clerical leadership would be wise to accommodate recent shifts in lay Catholic opinion (and in American life) rather than resist or alter them.

With one exception, the authors display none of the self-consciousness now common among social scientists about how their own values and histories might have shaped their research. Yet the book reflects the preoccupations that emerged so dramatically in the decade after Vatican II. No less than the Vatican is *Laity, American & Catholic* focused on issues of (1) institutional control and (2) sex. Most of the questions in the *NCR* survey deal with authority, hierarchy, rights, and sex-related rules.

To all appearances, these authors are not radicals but the kind of moderate reformists who believe that a social organism like the church can pass relatively easily from one state to another with no real threat to its substance or essential character. Thus, their questions also avoid inquiring into anything that might be truly jarring.

They confidently report, for example, that "among lay people there are high levels of consensus on core faith issues such as the Trinity, Incarnation, the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, and Transubstantiation." Quite possibly so. But apart from an uninformative reference to two unpublished research papers, one wonders how they know. They never inquire into these matters themselves and most surveys of Catholic opinion, in keeping with the media's lack of interest in matters theological, have focused almost entirely on "practical" questions of sex, ordination of married men and of women, approval of the pope, and politics. When the *New York Times*, at my request, added to this standard survey repertoire a question about how Catholics understood what happened to the bread and wine at Mass, the results were startling (*see*, "Signs & Numbers," *Commonweal*, January 27, 1995).

Consider again the authors' set of questions inquiring whether "you think a person can be a good Catholic without...[going to church every Sunday, obeying church teaching on birth control, divorce and remarriage, abortion, etc.]." What if they had added a few items like "without believing that Jesus rose bodily from the dead" or "without believing that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist under the appearances of bread and wine"? As optimistic believers in moderate change, the authors have shied away from probing at its less acceptable edges.

They are a little more forward but still circumspect about another area of possible disappointment, the laity's attitudes toward the social justice concerns obviously important to the authors and to likeminded Catholics. They did not inquire whether one could be a good Catholic and support capital punishment or oppose unions or try to avoid paying your legal share of taxes. In the one relevant query, helping the poor is acknowledged as an essential mark of being a good Catholic by more respondents (44 percent) than obeying the ban on contraception (24 percent). But this figure, too, is down from the 51 percent of six years earlier, and young Catholic adults, unlike their parents, now resemble their pre-conciliar grandparents in thinking concern for the poor peripheral to Catholicism. The authors occasionally recognize with regret that the dynamic making the laity *laissez faire* toward sexual teaching may be doing the same toward social teaching. The point is not pursued.

Their dichotomous framework is embedded within a quickly sketched but equally stark historical narrative, the story of the struggle of "Americanizers" against "Europeanists" (read, the Vatican). The former are natural freedom-lovers and democrats, the latter act out of fear, suspicion, insecurity, intolerance, and attachment to clerical power and "top-down authority." This history assumes, as mainline Protestantism largely has, that Christianity and American freedom, democracy, and liberal individualism are convergent, and that the hordes of suspect Catholics washed ashore in the last century could be redeemed by the melting pot of assimilation.

Occasionally this perspective results in statements with a startlingly nativist flavor. Claims like the pope's to doctrinal authority are, the book says, "in tension with the American temper and the very thing the U.S. Constitution was written to restrict." But generally it is simply naive history in a triumphalist mode, without shadow or irony.

What other stories might have framed, in part or in whole, the authors' research? One is the moving story common to

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many religious or ethnic groups who have struggled to balance the benefits of assimilation in the United States with the desire to retain the distinctive identity essential to their very survival. This story has a minor place in *Laity, American & Catholic*, but only in regard to Latino Catholics, where it is multiculturally correct to sympathize with the losses entailed in assimilation. Otherwise that possibility is ignored or quickly dismissed.

Joyce K. Luzzi

Dirty Windows

This place
Has dirty windows that scrub
Against new sunlight every morning
The way old bars of homemade

Soap rake
Skin off an open palm, light
Harmed, turned to the color old sweat
Prints on a collar, but

She can't
Really tell, coddled cataracts
Inoperable at her age, rage beaten
Cleaner than any bedsheets rubbed,

House-proud,
Blue put in, old-fashioned punctuation
Mark; her name's taped to the wall
Here by the bed, thick letters

On a card,
But she can't really read it, those
Necessary markings that point out a spot
That's finally faded, bleached

Thin
As blue-veined hands that wring
Tight fabric to white ash; and every day
Shines in here, dull as the last gold tooth

But she can't
Really chew it, no argument, night's
Better, light dim as no dust on the furniture
Or Monday morning laundry hanging on the line,

Finally finished.

There is another obvious story in which the authors might have set their study: the precipitous decline of the very mainline Protestant denominations whose point of view this book implicitly adopts. Not a few scholars have concluded that the post-conciliar Catholic church is well embarked on a similar trajectory. The absence of all but the most oblique references to this Protestant story is especially puzzling because one of the authors has made an outstanding contribution to its study. There are fleeting references in the text to *Vanishing Boundaries: The Religion of Mainline Protestant Baby Boomers* (Westminster/John Knox, 1994) written by Dean R. Hoge along with Benton Johnson and Donald A. Luidens, but nothing indicates the sober warning it contains for Catholic reformers.

Vanishing Boundaries studied a representative sample of baby boomers (between thirty-three and forty-two years old, late enough for the return to church that frequently accompanies having a family) who had been confirmed as teenagers in the Presbyterian church. Two decades or more after their confirmations, only 52 percent of this group were "churched"—members of a church who attended services at least six times a year. Only 39 percent were Presbyterians, and most of these, the authors concluded, were not likely to sacrifice time, energy, or resources to church concerns, whether liberal or conservative. They did not challenge traditional church teachings, but merely reinterpreted them in terms not very different from the tenets of agnostic baby boomers: Take care of your family, try to live by the Golden Rule, but also don't carry your selflessness to any extreme.

Moreover, it is "likely that their children will be even less committed to Christianity or to the church than they themselves," the authors stated. "Few of their children will rebel, for there is little to rebel against; they are more likely to be marginally involved in church life or to drift away."

Now recall that this is a study of confirmed Presbyterians—a church that ordains married men and women; does not condemn contraception, abortion, or remarriage after divorce; is inclusive in its criteria for membership; prides itself on affirming American values; and emphasizes democratic decision making and the laity's rights to participate in congregational spending, selecting pastors, and determining official church positions. In other words, a church that has long since institutionalized the kinds of concerns that *Laity, American & Catholic* highlights as crucial to American Catholicism's future.

Several years ago, when the results of his study first became public, I asked Dean Hoge, himself a Presbyterian who has long been on the faculty at The Catholic University of America and has published many influential studies of Catholicism, whether he thought the bleak prognosis applied to Catholics as well as Presbyterians. Probably not to the newer waves of Latino or Asian Catholic immigrants, he replied, but certainly to those Catholics in the same demographic categories as Presbyterians: middle-class or better, well-educated, eager for their children to attend the best schools, unwilling to cut themselves off from sympathetic and broad-

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ening contacts with other cultures and beliefs. I remember being impressed with his social scientist's dispassionate attitude toward what seemed to be the inevitable demise of his church in any recognizable form, and doubted that, were his prediction to prove accurate, I could summon the same equanimity toward the demise of mine.

Perhaps this detachment explains why he no more than the other authors of *Laity, American & Catholic* saw fit to relate their investigation in some way to what the very first sentence of *Vanishing Boundaries* says "has been a central fact of religious life in the United States for a quarter of a century."

Two chapters of this book stand out as exceptions to much of what I have said. They are the ones on "Three Generations of Catholics: Pre-Vatican II, Vatican II, and Post-Vatican II" and especially the following one devoted wholly to young people, "Post-Vatican II Catholics." Both are written by James D. Davidson, a sociologist at Purdue University and the one author who, in the chapter comparing generations, indicates his own place in recent church developments.

In those chapters, we learn that 59 percent of the pre-Vatican II generation stated that the Catholic church is either "the most important part" or "among the most important parts" of their lives, compared to 48 percent of the Vatican II generation, whose formative years spanned the council, and 29 percent of the post-Vatican II generation, who came of age in the 1970s and 1980s. Members of the older, pre-Vatican II generation were also two to three times more likely than the post-Vats to have heard of the American bishops's pastoral letters on nuclear arms, the economy, and the concerns of women.

Younger Catholics, Davidson writes, "place a higher priority on being good Christians than they do on being good Catholics." They distinguish sharply between God's law and church law and "put higher priority on God's law." They "tend to have a deinstitutionalized and democratic view of the church."

All of which might be good news, signs of a more profound form of Christian discipleship than their elders'—until one notices how much these responses coincide with those of the lukewarm baby boomers of *Vanishing Boundaries*. In fact, when Davidson reports that "Post-Vatican II Catholics view God as an all-loving and forgiving friend who wants us to be nice to others," he is fully aware of the housebroken status of a God of niceness.

Doubts about the depth of the post-Vats' discipleship grow when Davidson reports that, in fact, members of this younger generation know relatively little about the faith—and rightly resent their ignorance. "They feel shortchanged by the church," he says, quoting one post-Vat, "As far as the Bible goes, I couldn't even tell you what's in the Old and New Testaments"; and another, "I'm appalled by what I was (not) taught in CCD"; and another, "I didn't know what parts of the Mass mean"; and another, "We just shot paper wads in religion class."

Finally, Davidson reports that post-Vats simply "lack a vocabulary to help them form a Catholic identity and interpret their Catholic experiences." He contrasts this with an older generation's fund of terms, from mortal and venial sin to holy days of obligation, confession, and Stations of the Cross—"a common language with which to communicate with one another about their Catholic experiences." Lacking "a Catholic word bank upon which to draw," Davidson concludes, post-Vats can scarcely be distinguished from members of any mainline Protestant denomination.

The value of this chapter is not only its unvarnished presentation of sobering news. Based more on Davidson's own research rather than the *NCR* poll, it surfaces themes like the younger generation's meager knowledge of Catholicism, its Nutri-sweet image of God, and its impoverished religious vocabulary that go beyond the book's general preoccupation with sex and church organization. At the same time, Davidson also draws attention to a paradox demanding further examination. As church leaders might have hoped, young Catholic adults who have undergone Catholic education at all three stages, from elementary school to college, "have high levels of religious commitment": Compared to others their age, they are much likelier to be Mass-goers, have a positive reaction to recent developments in the church, and be most familiar with the bishops' pastoral letters. Yet they also are more likely to question traditional church views on morality and authority.

Lacking "a Catholic word bank upon which to draw," post-Vatican II Catholics can scarcely be distinguished from members of any mainline Protestant denomination.

If more of *Laity, American & Catholic* had probed the existing data in this way, the book would have at least unsettled assumptions cherished by both conservatives and liberals, Americanizers and Europeanists; and it would provide a much more realistic guide to the choices the church confronts. Those choices include matters of worship, spirituality, education, theology, belief, and disposition that are not separate from the distribution of decision-making authority in the church but cannot be reduced to it either.

One of the drawbacks of the stark, good-guys-versus-bad-guys framework informing this book is that it encourages an atmosphere where merely to raise these qualms immediately qualifies one as a "restorationist." That is positively silly—and intellectually counter-productive. The historian who looks back may shake her head in wonder at how the ideological commitments that made these scholars highlight one set of very real issues became blinders that kept them—and many others in their camp—from examining so much else. □

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Rx FOR AILING PARISHES

Change the tone; involve everyone; turn outward

Thomas P. Sweetser

On most Sundays in most parishes, Catholics file into the pews with low expectations of being inspired, challenged, engaged, or motivated. As a pastoral consultant, I work with parishes to raise those expectations. My first step is to survey the attitudes and practices of the parishioners, active and inactive. When we ask if they come to Mass regularly, over 70 percent say, at least every other week. This usually puzzles parish leaders, because by their count generally less than half of the registered parishioners are present on any given weekend.

People say they come, but many don't. Why not? In part they no longer feel obligated to attend (less than half think it is a sin to miss Mass on the weekend). Since telling people they must go to church under pain of sin is no longer compelling, something else must be drawing those who do go. And we explore this with one of our survey questions, "What is the primary reason you come to Mass?" The highest response is "to hear the Word of God." Higher than obligation, Communion, the homily, the music, or a sense of community. Why so strong an attachment to the Word? For one thing, most Catholics encounter Scripture only at Mass. Only a third read the Bible except on rare occasions and they say they find the readings at Mass inspiring and thought-provoking.

Of course, it is possible that people say the Word of God is most important because nothing else has much meaning for them. The sense of community is often reduced to a perfunctory handshake at the greeting of peace. The music is frequently more suitable for listening than for joining in. The homily? In many cases it does not speak to people's experience. On our surveys, people say they want meaningful homilies and not just a repetition of the Gospel story. People hunger for meaning during Mass. They have grown accustomed to settling for less.

What can be done to stem the tide?

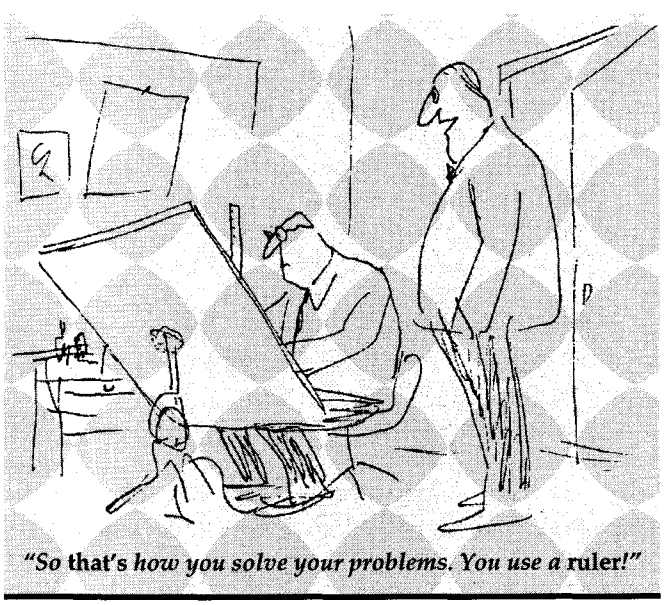
First step: Ask the folks! Parish leaders must be ready to hear the real views and feelings of parishioners. At first, people give priests and leaders the benefit of the doubt. "Everything is fine. Father, this is such a lovely parish." If, however, parishioners catch on that the leadership wants to know what people really think of the liturgy, the parish, the pastor, church teachings, it comes tumbling out. The occasion for this disclosure must be safe and supportive. It must also be productive. Too many people have given up speaking their minds to church leaders. What good does it do? Nothing changes.

One place to hear what people have to say is in small groups. These may be one-shot focus groups or ongoing small communities. Parishioners are invited to join with a few others and are asked specific questions about various aspects of the parish. They may also gather in more informal settings for general discussions about what they would like to see happen or changed in the parish. Whatever the format, the information must get back to the pastor, staff, and lay leaders in ways that can be heard, assimilated, and acted upon.

That takes us to step two: openness to change. I can hear the leadership reply, "We are open to change. We're changing all the time. We have a new hymnal and new songs; we have a new religious education program that is lectionary-based. We have a new approach for the youth program. What more can we do?"

For the person who comes to Mass but not much else, nothing much looks as though it's changed. Church neither excites, nor speaks to their needs. When parishioners have a crisis in their lives, they may contact the parish, but more likely, it is a friend or counselor who gets called. The parish doesn't seem to have an established place in their lives.

Once parish leaders really listen well to the stories and



"So that's how you solve your problems. You use a ruler!*"*

Thomas P. Sweetser, S.J., *founder and co-director of the Parish Evaluation Project in Chicago, Illinois, is also co-author of* Recreating the Parish *(Sheed & Ward).*

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understand the feelings of those average parishioners, they must do something in response to what they have heard.

"But do what?" "What will make the church important to those people?" My answer is: change the *tone*, change the *decision making*, and change the *focus*.

Change the tone

Question: Given the many options that fill people's lives, especially on weekends, what will tip the balance toward coming to church? Answer: Change the tone of the Mass. Most parishioners now have to make a conscious choice to attend Mass. A Mass that is welcoming, inclusive, rewarding, and meaningful can make the difference. From the moment someone walks through the doors of the church, they should feel "at home." Everything the person encounters, from the environment of the church to the gathered congregation, must speak, "welcome, come be part of our worship. Be part of our community of faith."

Whether the parish is large or small, this tone of welcoming and acceptance is infectious. I once attended a nondenominational church where I was one among thousands of worshippers. I will never forget the attention given to me, from being guided to a parking place to the welcome at the door. It was not obtrusive or overdone, just respectful and inviting. Contrast that to a small parish where I was one of a few hundred attending Mass. The predominant feeling was aloofness and alienation. No one reached out to me, or anyone else, for that matter. I was on my own.

First impressions count. In five to seven minutes people size up the situation and make a judgment about whether the climate is inviting or alienating. That is how much time a parish has to keep people interested in the Mass. The presider has much to do with setting the tone. Greeters at the door, compelling music, or an inviting and warm environment can all be negated by the staid manner of the priest. "The Lord be with you," can be said in such a way as to mean, "I'm here to do my duty, you're on your own."

If, on the other hand, the priest processes up the middle aisle with a smile, making eye contact with people and then turns to greet the congregation with genuine interest, he sets the tone for what follows.

Pray in a manner that conveys the meaning of the prayer, whether of petition or praise. Preach the homily with passion and intelligence. Receive the gifts with gratitude and appreciation. These are the tone-setters that say this is more than a routine celebration. It is a loving encounter between God's people and our Creator and Lord. What is so difficult about that? And why should it be such a rare experience in Catholic churches?

The tone and spirit of parish worship—praying, preaching, presiding, singing—may get comments in the parking lot, but it is rarely critiqued or analyzed in a serious and constructive way. Imagine what could happen if it became a regular agenda item for parish council or liturgy committee meetings? The problem—and the hesitation—is how to raise these delicate matters with sensitivity and care so as not to threaten or insult the presider and other liturgical ministers. A way must be found. What could be at stake, if not addressed, is the future life of the parish.

This effort at creating a positive, accepting tone in the parish carries over to the way the phones are answered at the office, newcomers are welcomed into the parish, religious education and adult formation take place, and those in physical or spiritual need are cared for. If pastor, staff, and lay leaders pay attention and strive to create a welcoming atmosphere, then all these contacts become avenues for inviting people into the community and into worship. Once this atmosphere is established, parishioners are more willing to make allowances for shortcomings and failings. The parish is home to them, a community of caring, warts and beauty spots together. The parish acquires a reputation for friendliness and acceptance. This reputation is infectious and self-reenforcing as parishioners adopt this mentality and take responsibility for the care of one another.

Change the decision making

Creating a welcoming tone is a start, but it can be seen as a sham if it is not accompanied by a mentality of shared decision making. Who *owns* the parish? Is it the leadership—pastor, staff, council, and finance committee? Or is it the people? The rhetoric is that the parish belongs to the people. But most parish decision making shows that, in fact, it belongs to a select few. Nothing turns people off more than to realize they have no input or recourse into issues that affect their lives. The sanctuary is renovated to make the Mass, as the liturgy committee contends, "more liturgically correct." The baptismal preparation program is mandatory for all parents, no matter how many children they've had. The outdoor Stations of the Cross undergo an expensive renovation although they are used only once a year. The annual summer festival is canceled because it takes too much time and energy to prepare and is disruptive to priests and staff. These may be necessary decisions but the way in which they are made often ignores the wisdom and wishes of the parishioners. This is not to say that the entire parish needs to decide, but parishioners should be consulted, even those who are not very active.

Consider the renovation of the sanctuary. A change in the worship space probably affects more parishioners than any other decision a parish makes. They have a right to have their views known and opinions heard. One way to include people's ideas is to focus on the basic issues.

A select committee, after study and consultation, proposes a plan for the renovation. It is presented to all those attending Mass on a given weekend and includes basic information about the reasons for undertaking the project, about realistic alternatives, and about the cost. The parishioners are assured that they are being consulted before anything is settled, and they are being given a chance to influence the outcome.

For the first week or two the people are asked to study

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the plan and think up reasons for *not* going with the proposal, even if they like it. Then there follows a period for considering reasons for accepting the plan. At the end of this consultation, every adult member is asked to fill out a card in the pews that asks, "If you had to make the decision, would you accept or reject the proposal? What is one reason for your decision?" The parishioners are not voting on the plan but their inclusion in the process shows that their judgment and wisdom are considered worthwhile and valuable. No one is left out. The results of this consultation are then turned over to a group made up of people the parish respects and trusts to reach a final decision.

This example is only one among many of how parishioners can be included in the parish's decision making. As people have a chance to provide input into its liturgies, programs, and activities, they begin to take greater interest in and ownership of its life and operation. The community becomes a circle of believers, each with unique gifts and insights, who contribute as a whole to the future direction of the parish.

Change the focus

The third and most profound change that will maintain interest and provide growth is to shift the focus of activity from parish to everyday life. Too often a large chasm exists between what people do during the week and what happens in church. People take a giant step over this chasm when they attend Mass. They seem to leave behind one world and enter another. This sense of separation can be reenforced when leaders seek volunteers to help with parish ministries and projects. The more gifted and generous the volunteer, the more the person is asked to participate in, or even lead, parish functions.

This is not a bad thing for those who have the time and inclination. Most of those who volunteer feel they receive much more than they give, but this call for volunteers and an emphasis on *parish* ministry should be secondary to stressing holiness in home and workplace. The Gospels suggest that most of Jesus' ministry was in the fields and on the streets. In this context, the parish should become a place to strategize and gather support for the real ministry of healing, forgiving, and nourishing people "out there."

Imagine what a parish would look like if, at every Mass, activity, and program the rallying cry was, "You are the grace-bearer. Take the Good News to those who really need it the most, those in your homes, offices, malls, freeways, and airports. Practice the Gospel readings, share a peace greeting, extend Eucharist, be church to those you meet. We will help you. We will listen to what happens. We will accept whomever you bring back with you to our next gathering. We are behind you, but it is in your hands. No one else can touch the people you will interact with this day, this week, this month. May God be with you, as we are in spirit."

In order to get across this emphasis on everyday life, the liturgies and programs must cease to be inward looking and become outward directed. The active members are not the ones who belong to four parish organizations, help out with

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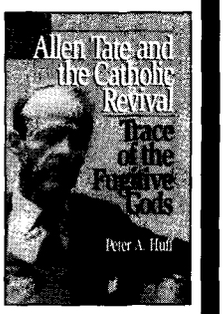

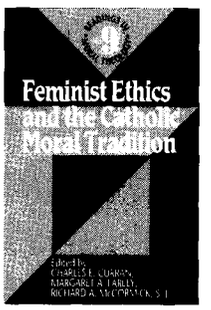

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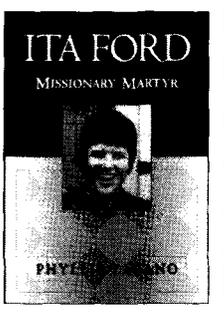

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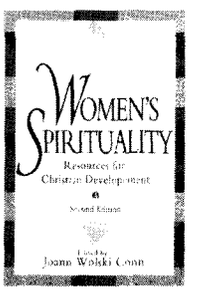

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six ministries, and count the collection. The truly active members are the ones who spend their energy ministering to their family, friends, acquaintances, and co-workers. They take what motivation and resources they need from the parish community and give themselves to those who may not encounter church in any other way but through them. At times, these active church-in-the-everyday ministers may spend time sharing their experiences and forming other parishioners in this ministry. The focus, however, is looking outward to the world and surrounding community. Only a fraction of the focus is on the parish and its own operation. The purpose of the parish is to be of service to the everyday ministry of its people.

What I propose in the parishes I serve is a change of tone, a shift in decision making, and a new focus. That is because the core of parish life is fostering relationships in three interdependent areas. One area is fostering a personal, loving relationship with the God who is within and among us. The second area is to help parishioners foster relationships with those that are close to them, whether family, friends, or community. If belonging to a parish does not support and enhance one's personal relationships then it is not relevant to

STRUCTURE MATTERS

An article by Bill Broderick last fall ["Does Your Diocese Have a Council?" October 20] took note of a 25-percent decline, over the period between 1984 and 1995, in the number of U.S. dioceses and archdioceses with active diocesan pastoral councils, despite their approval by the Bishops' Committee on the Laity and the revised Code of Canon Law.

Why the decline? An answer based on empirical data would call for a gifted sociologist with a generous grant and plenty of free time. Lacking these prerequisites, I can only hazard a guess, but one based on some experience. I think most bishops would find value in regular consultations with a pastoral council, but only for clearly stated purposes and with a workable structure. Nobody wants to gather in frustration, to have meetings for the sake of having meetings.

When Bishop Joseph P. Delaney became ordinary of the Diocese of Fort Worth in late 1981, he inherited an active diocesan pastoral council from the founding bishop, John J. Cassata. Both the former bishop and his successor regarded the council as moderately effective, but, as he became more settled in his diocese, Bishop Delaney found a growing tension in the consultation process. He had two major advisory bodies, the Presbyteral [priests'] Council and the Diocesan Pastoral Council. Often he found himself going from one of these bodies to the other to mediate conflicting advice he was receiving, or at least to inform one council of the other's deliberations.

Bishop Delaney explained his concern to each council. After four months of studying the matter separately, the two considered possible alternative models in joint session at an all-day meeting in November 1986, and then created a joint task force with four members from each council. The task force met monthly for almost a year. However leisurely that may seem, the time was well-spent; the new model recommended by the task force has served the diocese well for nearly a decade.

By way of preparing for the creation of a new advisory body, the Diocesan Pastoral Council voted to dissolve itself. The Presybteral Council could not be dissolved since it is mandated by canon law, but eventually its constitution was rewritten to conform to the new structure and new procedures that the joint task force recommended.

What emerged might be described as a merger that's not quite a merger. The new entity, formally established in October 1987, was named the Diocesan Pastoral Advisory Council (familiarly, DPAC), so called to distinguish it from the previous Diocesan Pastoral Council. By the terms of its new constitution, the Presybteral Council continues to be elected by the priests of the diocese; it has eight elected members and two appointed members, the vicar general and the chancellor. The lay membership of DPAC is made up of two eight-member groups, one of professional ministers in the church, mostly lay but usually including one deacon and one woman religious, and the other of lay Catholics.

Nominations to all the positions are conducted in a diocesan-wide search amply publicized in the diocesan newspaper, *The North Texas Catholic*. Anyone can nominate but pastors are particularly encouraged to do so. An interested person may nominate himself or herself. When the nominations are in, DPAC's agenda committee and the director of pastoral planning appoint several subcommittees to interview the nominees in terms of criteria

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what is most important to the person. The parish's role is to keep people connected to one another.

The third area important for parish life is fostering relationships with the world outside the parish and beyond the circle of one's community. "There is neither Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. All are one in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:28). The mission of the parish is to accept and include everyone. The task of its members is to be church to those who feel alienated, disenfranchised, and neglected.

Parishes remain viable institutions. They have the potential for much good. Changes, however, must take place if parishes are going to live up to their calling as inclusive, inviting, outward-looking gospel communities. Jesus said to his disciples when they told him that the people were growing hungry, "Why do you not give them something to eat yourselves?" (Luke 9: 13). Like the disciples, our response is often, "How can we do that? Our resources are too limited. It is an impossible task." Jesus' response shows that we should take what we have and see how far it goes. We may be surprised to discover, as Luke tells us, that after everyone had eaten that there was plenty left over. The same is possible in our parishes. □

established by the council, and to offer their judgments and extensive written comments to the bishop: "Highly Recommended," "Recommended with Reservations," and "Not Recommended." The bishop, with his immediate advisers, usually curial officials and the director of pastoral planning, makes the final appointments, taking care to bring about an even distribution of members in terms of geography, ethnicity, gender, and age. The appointments are for five years, a lengthy term, but members are given the option of resigning after three years.

The most significant difference between the old regime and the new, apart from the fact that clergy, laity, and religious began meeting together, was the establishment of a new format for meetings. Instead of meeting monthly for two hours on a Sunday afternoon, DPAC members gather four times a year for two-day meetings. They come on Thursday night to a retreat center and deliberate with the bishop all day Friday and a half-day Saturday. Lay members have to sacrifice a vacation day; priests must be absent from their parishes at the busiest time of their week. These provisions lend the deliberations a seriousness and discipline that other formats cannot match.

Some have questioned the canonical probity of combining the Presbyteral Council and the lay Pastoral Council. True, canon law reserves certain issues for discussion by the Prebyteral Council; accordingly, these are handled in special sessions at the quarterly meetings of the larger council. Also, from time to time Bishop Delaney may choose to consult with his Presbyteral Council alone about matters pertaining primarily to priests. These provisions satisfy the requirements of canon law.

Structure alone, however carefully designed, does not guarantee results; a key to the success of DPAC to date has been attention to detail and to "facilitation." On his appointment to Fort Worth, Bishop Delaney created the position of planning director, a full-time position currently held by a skilled lay woman. She and an assistant prepare for the meetings well ahead of time, in consultation with the bishop and an agenda committee. Working on contract, Management Design Institute of Cincinnati, Ohio, has provided training in techniques of consensus decision making and the understanding of personality differences.

'Clergy, laity & religious meet together'

In practice, a major difficulty with the new model has been the pace of decision making. Whereas certain advisory boards such as the Diocesan Finance Council can usually resolve a major problem within the space of a two-hour meeting, DPAC has been known to struggle over a given issue for several meetings before a long-range plan is finally put into effect—for instance, a liquor policy in the diocese, the establishment of a renewal process, or proclaiming a "Year of the Eucharist." All these have come to pass, but slowly.

On the whole, however, it is commonly agreed in the diocese that the new model works. With careful planning and prudent use of human and monetary resources, a consultative body in the diocese can improve communications, uncover and deal with problems, strengthen lay-clergy relationships, and foster a deeper sense of the diocese as a community of Christians with a shared mission.

ROBERT W. WILSON

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CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, SURVIVAL & MONEY

A pastor reflects

Timothy S. Collins

When the bishop calls a priest to tell him he would like to make him a pastor (of all things!), the conversation can cause some disorientation. Friends of mine have committed poetry in their first communication with parishioners: not the best way to get started! Consider two other moments in the life of the very new pastor: the moment when he has to look for the reset button on the boiler (nobody mentioned this in the seminary); and the moment when he went to the bank and the parish's accounts were changed to respond to his signature. He is now signing checks for the parish school and its faculty, the rectory and its staff, for his fellow priests, for the bishop and his chancery, and for the upkeep and furnishing of the church. In many cases he is writing individual checks for sums larger than his yearly salary. In some cases he is looking at a final monthly balance which inspires more faith than confidence.

And now come the questions: Will the parish school eat up parish monies to the extent that other programs (for the elderly, for young adults, for those wishing to study and pray) cannot be started or sustained? Can he hire people to help with the parish's ministry now that union contracts and work rules have to be considered? Even religious sisters are under contract.

And what will his relationship be to his parishioners? Is he now a bill collector (tuition) and does he have to compromise pulpit time with old-time money-collecting sermons? What about families which say they are "very Catholic" and want to use a great many of the parish's services, most especially the parish school, but hardly ever find time for worship and the Sunday gathering? The idea of registering and using envelopes can cause an epiphany—or something else!

Book discussed in this essay

The Cost of Catholic Parishes and Schools
by Joseph Claude Harris
Sheed & Ward, $15.95, 178 pp.

And what about the impact on the parish and its school of a troubled urban society? Often the parochial school is a haven of safety and learning where children are cared for and can flourish. Nevertheless, some seeking to use the school are ambivalent about their relationship to Catholicism. I have had experiences of children professing a fundamentalist religion who made it nearly impossible to conduct religion classes. The best solution is probably to admit to the school those non-Catholics who are committed to some form of ecumenism.

The economic questions associated with a Catholic school which must charge tuition are daunting. For example, a Catholic who doesn't practice the faith in any regular fashion: charge a higher tuition? But what about the opportunity to evangelize? Or a non-Catholic (with an ecumenical sensitivity) who professes no religion at all. How do we set tuition for these families? If the parish is subsidizing the school, as is so often the case, should that subsidy apply only to registered and practicing Catholics from the parish? Should all others pay a tuition based upon the cost of the education?

What about the most challenging question of all: Are we, in charging tuition, damaging the unity of the parish by making the school available only to those who can afford it? In New York City we are told that more Catholic children attend public school than attend Catholic schools. What are the implications for a parish budget of such a reality? How do we devise ways to serve all our people?

Joseph Claude Harris's *The Cost of Catholic Parishes and Schools* says little about the spiritual leader we like to think we become when we acquire the title of pastor. It does say a great deal about the money which is necessary for the parish and its school, its getting and spending. I like Harris's way of concluding that much of this can somehow represent something Catholic.

In an early chapter, Harris discusses what research and analysis can tell us about the level of Catholic giving. The chapter is a good one, probably the most complete to date. Compared to others in Protestant churches, Catholics in their support of their parishes don't seem to come off so well. We've all heard the story about the dollar bill that boasted to the five-dollar bill that it was holier—because it went to church so often!

There is, however, a part of me wondering if some of the difference between ourselves and our Protestant friends is that they are not supporting so many commitments to religious orders and schools and hospitals and social agencies and missions. Yet in spite of these

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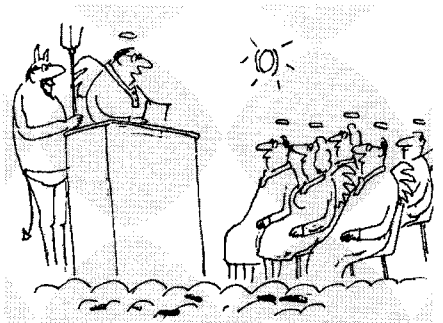
commitments, Harris finds examples of vibrant and enormously successful parishes which respond with enthusiasm and extraordinary generosity. In these instances he finds an energetic and empowering pastor who finds a way to encourage and enable the idealism of his people. Most Catholics accept that to some degree the pastor must represent the formalities of the institutional church. Most Catholics hope there will be more to it than that. Harris finds examples where a great deal more has been accomplished.

The book's best chapter, to my mind, discusses the emerging role of the laity in responsible financial stewardship in the church. If most parishes had a financial council of five people, and there are 19,000 parishes, then nearly 95,000 Catholics would be involved in the financial decision making of the church. To these responsible people, Harris recommends Professor Regina Hurzlinger's four questions: Are the organization's goals consistent with its financial resources? Is the organization practicing intergenerational equity? Are the sources and uses of funds appropriately matched? Is the organization sustainable?

Would it be too much to say that thus far the effects of all this consultation are not too obvious? We hear often enough about some bishops who have yet to see a dollar they didn't want to spend; and what can we say about pastors who conceive a new program with each lunar cycle? Too often we get little hard financial information from the parish or the financial offices of the diocese. And we sense that even the 95,000 people associated with church and parish financial councils are aware that they need more information, more tools for judgment, more of a sense of cooperating toward common supernatural goals.

Talk to priests in dioceses where the finances are mismanaged and the structures of the church neglected. Almost every priest can detail waste and foolishness; many can articulate the hopelessness such neglect begets. Too often there is a sense that what is needed is to get the diocese to close a lot of schools and parishes, to get the accounts balanced, and to set off with a new bishop



"Mr. Satan has a generous offer that could solve our cash flow problems...."

in new directions. Harris's book is important—almost beyond words—because his research shows that considered as a whole the parishes and the dioceses are for the most part successful. The church is not broke; most parishes will be able to sustain themselves.

As good as the news appears to be, we might remind ourselves of some of the things history teaches us about the church: practical solutions today—for example, regionalization of our schools, closing small parishes, and arranging for larger—are not always as practical as they might seem for tomorrow's world. Enormous parish churches, once the expression and symbol of vibrant faith communities and now located in struggling neighborhoods of the inner cities of New York, Newark, Detroit, and Chicago, testify to the fragile quality of practical church decision making. We appear to be good at starting things—we build buildings and promote activities—but when they no longer serve their sacred purposes, we have a serious tendency to consider what might be called the "museum alternative," whereby at enormous expense we preserve the buildings. Their beauty is often consoling; their silence a forlorn plea for people to come, to be interested, to care.

In effect, the history of the church's efforts in organizing itself is tense and difficult. It is an art form and doesn't always get good reviews! One view of the church is that it is comprised of numerous parish communities, each a small, even intimate, faith community with a responsible pastor and responding to a chief shepherd.

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Another way of looking at these matters sees a diocese as a gathering of branch offices, each under the direction of a branch manager, who in turn responds to a kind of sacred CEO. A sense of time and particularity is hard put to survive in this latter circumstance. Much as Saint Paul deferred to Saint Peter, and much as he encouraged unity among the faithful, he nevertheless wrote his letters to communities which were singular and which had different and even unique circumstances. Clearly he was at ease with the particular. Recent discussions of "base communities" are part of the tension of what is local as against what is central. Today when we organize for survival we often can succeed in making a building or an activity survive for a time. Making sure people will use and care for the building, and that they are interested and will support the activity is another matter. Think of the many beautiful and historic buildings of Europe. Many, some of them ecclesiastical, are empty spaces crying out for people. At least initially there is a difference between serving a locality and serving a region. We live in interesting times!

Finally, it might not be out of place for those making decisions in the church to recognize that as we are beginning to live in the age of a laity which shares many of the ministries of the church and its mission, so also we are starting to take on financial responsibilities of a greater magnitude. To hire a lay person with family responsibilities and then to transfer or even to discharge that person is a step of greater moral complication than making a change of a sister, a brother, or a priest. Great hurt can accompany thoughtless policy. Great good can come from a witness of Christ-like concern for those serving the church. That concern will have financial implications.

There are people who avidly read the box scores for every NBA game. I even know people who like to read market reports in the daily papers. At first sight it might appear this is a book for people who wish to immerse themselves in the agate typefaces of church financial reports.

But it is also a book for those Catholics who pay little attention to the connections among money, stewardship, and a sense of Catholic purpose. The church does not produce a marketable product. Rather, in response to its sacred mission it is the occasion of philanthropy, and through the generosity of its faithful it manages to become a mediating institution in a society which is not always comfortable with its presence. Harris can help one understand such things. His research is good. Not only is it extensive, it is sensitive to the moment in which we try to be church.

All in all there is more good news than we might suspect. But as a church we have a lot to think about. Highly recommended. □

SCREEN

Richard Alleva

NIETZSCHEAN EXPRESS

'Trainspotting'

Irvine Welsh's acclaimed *Trainspotting* is a book of linked short stories, but the John Hodge (scenarist)—Danny Boyle (director) film adaptation has such unity and thrust that it feels like a work written directly for the screen, or at least the adaptation of a tightly plotted novel. In its first half we watch the protagonist, heroin-addicted Mark Renton, destroying himself with the cheerful collaboration of his "mates": moronic Spud, sly and maniacal Sick Boy, and the nonaddicted but sadistic thug, Begbie. Another pal, the soccer-loving Tommy, becomes an addict after losing his girlfriend through a feckless prank perpetrated by Mark. These young Scottish males dissipate and brawl, steal to support their habits, and coast on the dwindling funds of Edinburgh's public welfare system. A brush with the law and a near-fatal injection, followed by an equally hideous "cold turkey" cure, persuade our hero to get clean and go straight. In the concluding half, Renton is thriving as a real estate agent in London, but his friends, now completely sunk in criminality, seek him out, get him fired, and inveigle him into a drug deal. Finally, Renton realizes that he has become not so much the slave of drugs as the captive of his friends. "Enablement" is too weak a word for what they're doing to him. Not only are they encouraging his addiction, they themselves embody the circumstances of addiction. They are swampland, quicksand, sucking Mark down. So Renton must drain the swamp.

As my summary indicates, *Trainspotting*'s real theme isn't drug abuse but the struggle against one's environment, with friends standing for environment. Yet some have denounced the movie as a glorification of heroin, and it's easy to pin down what gives offense. Mark himself broaches the question: Why take heroin? He answers, "For the pleasure of it. Otherwise, we wouldn't do it. After all, we're not stupid. Not *that* stupid, anyway." If we multiply the pleasure of orgasm by a thousand, he suggests, we may get an inkling of the ecstasy the drug yields. In fact, why even review the reasons for taking or not taking it? he wonders. "Who needs reasons when you've got heroin?"

But this is all in the first three minutes of the movie. For the next eighty-seven we are immersed in the horrors of addiction, depicted with a vividness, even gruesomeness, not found, to my knowledge, in any previously released film. Violent crime, grinding poverty, squalid dwellings, incontinence, drug-induced sexual impotence, alienation from loved ones, the death of a baby due to his addicted mother's neglect (the sight of the dead child's bloated face is something I'd like to erase from my memory but can't), legal punishment, the horrors of "cold turkey"—they're all here and it's all hellish. Nor does *Train-*

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spotting buy into the big lie of *Leaving Las Vegas*, that is, that self-destruction is honest, even stoically noble, as long as it's done in solitude with only a lovely prostitute to waft the suicide out onto the waters of death. No, *Trainspotting* shows that suicide is inevitably contaminating: parents are shamed, loved ones berated, innocents robbed, employers duped. That the movie doesn't deny the momentary ecstasy of heroin is part of its candor, and that candor certifies its exposé of heroin's horror. Furthermore, the exhilaration is shown to be cognate with the horror: the first thing that wretched mother does after discovering her baby's corpse is to take another hit of the very drug that helped bring about the infant's death. What else would dull her horror?

Yet, I'd be kidding you if I were to leave you with the impression that *Trainspotting* is humanistic or spiritually uplifting. Its antidrug propaganda is powerful but incidental. This film has wit and immense vitality, but it is a vitality rooted in nihilism. A Nietzschean joy pulses through the movie, energizes you, but leaves you with a rare feeling of frustration at the conclusion. You feel charged with life but with nowhere to go.

In the opening scene, Mark and pals are on the run after another bit of thievery. Renton hurtles toward us over and over again in a succession of fast backtracking shots that immediately establish the battering, percussive rhythm of Danny Boyle's direction. And on the soundtrack we hear Mark's mocking meditation: "Choose a TV. Choose a VCR," etc., as if "life" were nothing more than the appurtenances of a middle-class lifestyle. But why would I do that, wonders Mark, why would I choose life when I've got heroin?

But, in the movie's final scene, Renton is again heading straight toward the camera, now walking determinedly, not running in panic. Again, we hear the litany, "Choose life. Choose a job," etc. And Mark tells us that he will. Have TVs and VCRs become his new drugs-of-choice? Is this the moral victory of materialism?

Of course not. The instinct for self-preservation is strong in Mark Renton and has survived heroin and crime and filth and his suicidal and homicidal friends. Money and the things money buys are merely the latest life buoys on which he clings. What will it be next time—a woman? travel? macrobiotics? Or perhaps the writing of a book called *Trainspotting*, soon to be a major motion picture? Mark has believably transcended drugs, but he's not heading toward any sort of spiritual transcendence. But, then, spiritual transcendence must seem a pretty weird concept to the makers of this movie and, indeed, to most young artists working today.

Perhaps Spengler was right when he said that Western civilization was Faustian, but, as one of *Faust*'s translators, Walter Kaufmann, pointed out, much of recent Western literature and drama is Mephistophelean: harsh, proudly undeceived, zestfully cynical, wittily cruel, iconoclastic, nihilistic. This is an art that exalts in tasting what's most poisonous in life and then dares life to dish out more. The drug addicts of *Trainspotting* are pint-sized, punk Fausts embracing hits of heroin instead of Helen of Troy, but the artists who have created these antiheroes are modern Mephistos, and the best stuff in *Trainspotting* partakes of Mephistophelean mockery:

Mark's near-fatal overdose is staged as a parody of a meal at a four-star restaurant, with the drug supplier taking on the role of maître d'. Though charged with horror and a sort of grim pity, the scene never ceases to be comedy.

The "cold turkey" session begins with Mark barricading himself in his room and lining up three buckets: one each for urine, feces, vomit. On the soundtrack, the "Habanera" from *Carmen* purrs along. The music, composed to portray the sensuality of a beautiful woman, is here yoked with bodily pain and disgust.

The most notorious scene in the film is also its most paradigmatic. Renton has lodged two cocaine suppositories (transitional drugs meant to ease him into "cold turkey") up his rectum. An attack of diarrhea forces him to excrete into "the worst toilet in Scotland." Panicked, Mark launches his entire body into the unflushable toilet to retrieve the unmelted suppositories. Just as we are about to lose our own lunches, something amazing happens. We see our hero swimming in an enchanted sea. Through sparkling clean water he peers and finally spots, glistening like faerie jewels on the seabed, the cocaine tablets. Mark grasps them and shouts his triumph and, lo! we hear his words under water, for Renton is now a sort of merman, invulnerable, immortal! Then he pulls himself out of the toilet and he is nothing but Mark Renton, drug addict and loser, soaking wet and hands caked with excrement.

That's the essence of *Trainspotting*: through filth into poetry and back into filth. The insolent vitality that courses through the movie, expertly served by the poster-bright photography and amazingly adroit acting (especially Ewan McGregor as Renton and Robert Carlyle as Begbie), expresses the vitality that is within Mark and that helps him to conquer his addiction but cannot provide him with any real reason to go on living once he is "clean." To be sure, our hero chooses life. Then what? Or are we meant to ask, So what? □

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Poems

Dixie Partridge

Retrieval

(after my sister's poems)

In the iced sky, I see the child
milk-whiteness of your skin,
and hold my eyes to the receding form
of the plane you leave on, as we used to
as children with hawks or eagles
when they caught their prey, lifted
and left the earth, it seemed,
for good.
We knew if we looked away
we'd lose them sooner, lose any hope
of crossing over, any sign of that world
they existed in whole

not as part only of our watching,
our back-sprawled view
as they circled our resistance
to rising, our squirm
against the itch of pasture grass
for the real fear of missing the dive,
that breath-caught, heated instant
shot with such control
we trembled.

We still do not know why
witnessing something beautiful is followed
by loneliness.
Your thin hands felt chilled like my own,
pressing that far reach
between words.
We've moved through days
as through repeated wicket openings,
bone ash under our feet,
receiving something from coldness
and heat, the ceramic beauty of skin
that can be seen through
as fine china.

And despite all we have missed,
we go on because we must
for those who have counted for us,
for all, really,
who have lived on those moments when birds
suddenly compose out of cloud
and scream something chameleon as our names
from fabulous throats.

From the Shallows

After Hearing My Mother's Voice on Tape from Twenty Years before

The river stones shine
through shallows,
a late slant of sun floodlighting
their litany of speech,

and a yellow leaf—ghost bird—
floats limb to limb, touching
the husk of my skin with a faint searing,
a reminder that every sadness
in every life can be your own,
but joy you may never feel at home in.

Low streams of autumn allow
the speech of stones....How far
shall we listen
for the tremor native to our voices?
I mouth sounds of names
for their soothing—
moss...catkin...pebble—
hear ripples out of rock,
my mother's voice in my throat:
language pulled out of us
to become release.

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Swept away

An Accidental Autobiography
Barbara Grizzuti Harrison
Houghton Mifflin, $24.95, 396 pp.

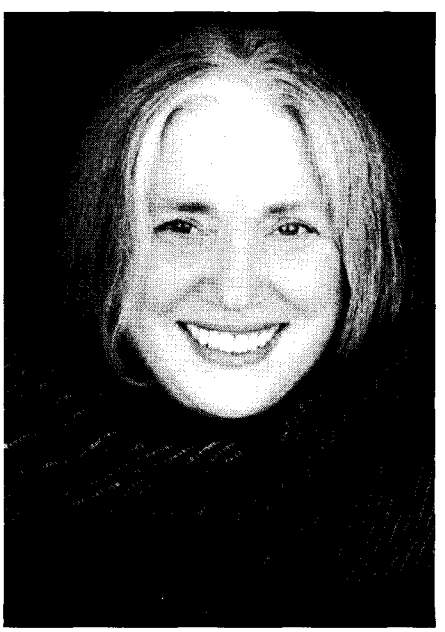
Emil Antonucci

The events of Barbara Grizzuti Harrison's life are the stuff of a good half-dozen novels. An intense childhood in a troubled Italian family in Brooklyn (a mother who demeans her and a father who tries to kill her); a long, bleak servitude in the Jehovah Witnesses from the age of nine to nineteen till her escape to the East Village to make a life of her own; first love with a black musician, the painful end of that affair (and its surprising reprise thirty-two years later); an unhappy marriage in exotic places that ends in divorce. With two adored small children she makes an independent life for herself and finds success as an esteemed writer. She suffers physical and psychological ailments that would undo most of us. Yet she prevails, traveling the world, interviewing celebrities, writing well-received books, and even living in a Park Avenue high-rise with a pool on the roof. It is the great myth come true: poor Brooklyn ethnic artist invades and conquers Manhattan (*see* John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever*).

But don't be put off by the apparent sensational confessional aspects of the book. The value of this memoir is in its artistic form. The true presence of the author is not in the record of events described, but in her language, her voice.

The story of a life is a desperate invention formed from the whirlpool of recollection and imagination. Though our lives are lived in the linear chronology of years, our experience of life is a palimpsest, an enormous collage whose pieces keep shifting as memory shapes them. There is a kind of law of indeterminacy in life, as in physics. Each time we think about our past, we change it. The author's unique achievement in this book is not simply in its presentation of events but in finding just the right structure for telling her storied life. She has created a house of many levels and interconnecting rooms through which both the reader and the author wander. Each room provides a different view of what we see and feel, yet all views are true. The house is chock full of a vast treasure trove, like *Citizen Kane*'s castle, but all the crates are open and in full view.

Who we are is a question that may have no answer, but our thirst for an answer is what reading is all about. We try to enter another mind, another life, and compare it with our own. To see, feel, taste, or smell another world is a way of defining our own sense of ourselves. Only books provide this kind of detail. Music, painting, or film can move us deeply, but don't provide the specificity of emotion and concreteness of lived life writing does.



Barbara Grizzuti Harrison's book is rich, large, varied, and passionate, but not, I think, immoderate or excessive, as some reviewers have said. She is only exhaustive in her desire and pursuit of the whole of her being.

And yet, despite the full frontal revelations and the moral bungee jumping—sometimes hair-raising but enormously satisfying in its spring back from the depths of life to the heights of art—something or someone is hiding behind the dense, baroque foliage of Harrison's prose. There may be at work here (my Sicilian genes are kicking in) the deep Italian suspicion of *too* full a personal revelation that might deliver us into the hands of our friends as well as our enemies; the genius for "*faccia figura*," of presenting a fine image to the world. Of course in our world, that fine image is not some superficial social ideal, but an apparent fearless honesty.

The most intriguing absence in the book is any discussion of what must have been a singular transformation in Harrison's life: her conversion to Catholicism. She alludes to it throughout the book but never gives us an account. Is this simply because the experience is still too unformulated to speak of, or is this reserve a canny author whetting our appetite for a new book in the wings? I hope the latter. Catholics could use a sensual, passionate statement of belief right now.

In the introduction to her book Grizzuti Harrison says, "I have been conscious of only one imperative, not to corrupt the way my thoughts came to

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me by seeking to impose on them a pattern." She has been remarkably faithful to this imperative throughout a complex book. There are moments when the flights of prose may land with a thump, and there are many moments when you simply want to know more and are not given any help. But I think even these apparent flaws work. That's the beauty of the right form; it makes everything work for you.

Blake tells us that the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom, and here that path brings us to a new, shining penthouse of art. □

Emil Antonucci *is* Commonweal*'s designer and has never escaped Brooklyn.*

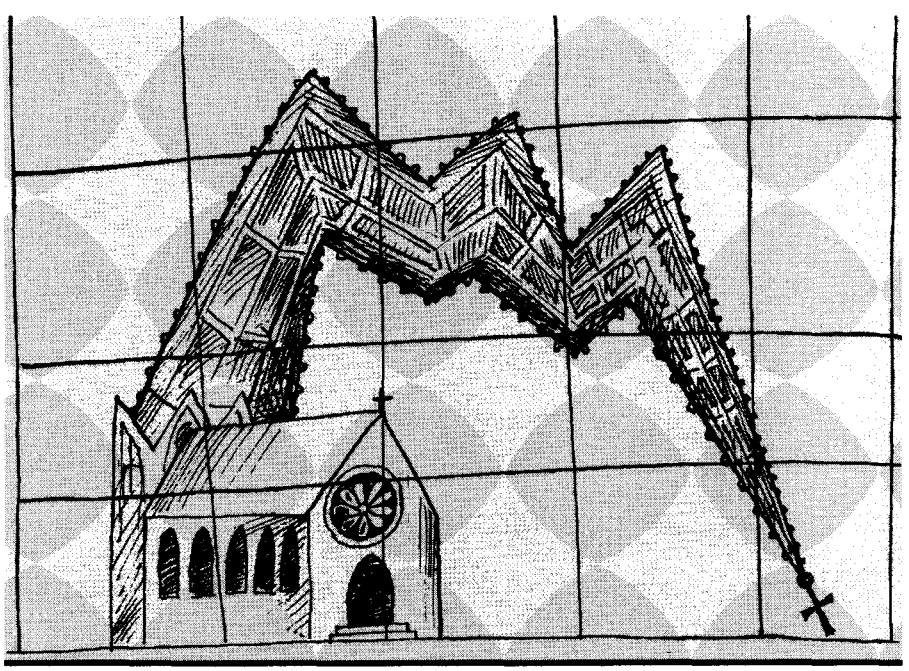
CAUTIONARY TALES

Grant Us Courage
Travels Along the Mainline of American Protestantism
Randall Balmer
Oxford, $22, 154 pp.

Martin E. Marty

Splendid narratives about twelve American Protestant congregations and their careers from the middle toward the end of this century carry implicit lessons. If nothing else, Randall Balmer's stories ought to remind Christians that they are a pilgrim people and that nothing lasts except the eternal Word. If everything written for Christians by "Church Growth" experts encourages them to think and build big, the same stories ought to serve as cautionary words. Those who see, or rather sightsee, empty churches across Europe, old Christendom, may very well find a shock of recognition in these (mostly) emptying churches that prospered at midcentury but languish or—says this Christian hoper who is looking over Balmer's shoulder and beyond his lenses—have to find new missions today.

Stock in Church Growth, a movement that employs market techniques to tell planners how to grow churches, might well turn bearish, if pastors and lay people read these accounts. The congregations whose careers are here condensed were but two generations ago nominated as "Great Churches" by readers of the flagship mainstream Protestant magazine, the *Christian Century*. They were not all large or wealthy or rich in prospect, but these parishes had something about them that spelled fulfillment and led readers to want the editors to find out and tell more about them. One or two of them still bustle and thrive; the others would be overlooked by nominators today.



Catholics who care enough to mourn, and some do, as tearful hierarchs close dozens of once thriving "Great Churches" in the former Catholic Ethnicdom of our metropolises, will find confirmation here of their impression that nothing lasts. Evangelicals who think their surge of these years is resulting or will result in stable, ever-prospering, congregations, will find reasons for caution in the same stories. The subtitle, which finds Balmer traveling "Along the Mainline" is unintentionally misleading; at least five of these churches did not belong to the cluster later dubbed mainline.

There is Washington Prairie Lutheran Church of Decorah, Iowa; few would have called it "mainline" back in midcentury. Those few who would, would have been making a category mistake. They certainly would not have considered Trinity Lutheran Church of Freistatt in Missouri and its Missouri Synod "mainline." And Olive Chapel Baptist Church in Apex, North Carolina, belonged to what the mainliners of 1950 thought of as a nadir denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, a church body that is now having its "Great Churches" hour.

Condense the plot of ten or eleven of these church stories into a line or two? You'll find it in the word of the Southern Baptist interim pastor at Olive Chapel, when Balmer phoned her about a visit: "Oh yes, this church had its real heyday during the 1950s. We've fallen on hard times since." Of course, you can balance that with the story of one of the two statistical winners, Bellevue Baptist Church, a hardline boomer that "won" by having lost—and having moved. Deserting downtown Memphis, it now owns a 376-acre "campus" and a $34 million (in

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1989) building complex in the "high-tech faux colonial" style. It is led by harder-line pastor Adrian Rogers, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and a leader in its fundamentalist takeover. The bottom line of Balmer's mildly disapproving but restrained story of Bellevue? Take the money, and the remnant, and run. Then grow, for another round.

Credit the other prospering parish, Mount Olivet Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, with having stayed in its middle-class neighborhood, and with having come up with the right mix of continuity (even in the blood line of the Youngdahl pastors) and innovation or enterprise. Its story is a rare one in this company.

So five of the twelve "Great Churches" at midcentury were at best located at the Lutheran-Baptist margins of the mainline then and hardly represent it now. Those evangelical or conservative Catholic relishers of *Schadenfreude* (the sin of rejoicing in others' misfortune) who blame "Mainline Follies"—which means adaptation-to-culture—for the church's problems, have few reasons to rub their hands together in glee. The remaining seven churches—Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational, "Community"—do not for the most part give evidence that they were folly-filled. Balmer shows that most of them have tried hard, tried everything. But demography, population changes, cycles of history, participation in religious games played by innings, occasional unpreventable misfortunes (for example, pastoral lapses and scandals), hit them all hard.

Round up or resurrect their pastors and lay leadership from a half century ago and listen to them; expect to hear regret at statistical dreams unfulfilled; reference, in many cases, to heydays and good old days; repentance for failing to have anticipated some changes and for having complacently ridden some crests. But they would like to go on and warn the Bellevues and the "Church Grown," megamall congregations that while they are enjoying batting in their half of the inning, not to enjoy *Schadenfreude* too much; not to make fun of "the mainline" and its "follies." They would do better to read Balmer and ask whether their boasts and brags and swaggerings—as *they* are doing the adapting-to-culture—are not setting them up for a future ironic traveler to visit. He or she might have to dredge up a title from an earlier Balmer work, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*. Or "My Eyes See What Once Had Seen the Glory of the Lord." Or the glorifying of humans.

If this review, which first beckons readers simply to enjoy an elegant if elegiac book, and to find the drama in quotidian existence, as Balmer does, is turning into a sermon, it has to have a point. The point is not: avoid hubris; make only small plans; don't try anything. It is rather: recognize the mission to and through and among people who, for a brief moment in time and a little spot in space, witness to the acts of God wherever, and erect buildings as momentary stays against chaos. Watch them as they there celebrate the divine mysteries and from which, no matter what their size or market possibilities, many engage in the works of love, as thousands of the people who have come and gone and, sometimes, stayed as the *Grant Us Courage* churches have done. □

Martin E. Marty *teaches at The University of Chicago and is senior editor of the* Christian Century. *His* Under God, Indivisible *(University of Chicago Press), was published this year.*

ONCE UPON A TIME

History of Vatican II
Vol. I
Guiseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak, eds.
Orbis Books, $80, 527 pp.

Francis X. Murphy

Writing from Bulgaria in 1936, the papal representative, Angelo Roncalli, remarked that the world was undergoing an "anthropological revolution." Twenty-five years later John XXIII, the septuagenarian pope, justified that observation by inaugurating Vatican Council II—a program to update the church in keeping with the signs of the times and to prepare the world for the restoration of Christian unity.

Based on the official *acta* of the council, innumerable studies, and the availability of diaries, notes, and recollections of prominent council prelates and advisers, Professor Guiseppe Alberigo of Bologna and a group of scholars including Joseph Komonchak of The Catholic University have inaugurated a five-volume history of the council of which this is the first.

On the background of the world's religious situation in 1959 the authors describe the vast preliminary work, the intrigues and skirmishing, that characterized the three-year preparation for the gathering of over 2,500 prelates, their advisers, and critics as well as the media. While Pope John had explicitly excluded the papal curia from participating in the debates, he confided the preparations to his secretary of state, Cardinal Domenico Tardini, whose organizing ability in analyzing the proposals of the world's episcopates and in turning Saint Peter's Basilica into a vast conciliar hall accommodating well over 3,000 participants was phenomenal.

Despite his age and somewhat garrulous appearance, the pope was a highly experienced man of the world with a peasant's faith, and deep spirituality. As a young priest he served as secretary to the social-minded bishop of Bergamo, traveled widely, meeting many of the church's hierarchy. As military chaplain, journalist, and professor he lived in the modern world. A historian, he served in the Vatican's diplomatic corps in

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Bulgaria and Greece, was the papal nuncio in Paris after World War II, and was created a cardinal and patriarch of Venice in 1953. On his way to Rome for the conclave, he was editing the proofs of his recent diocesan synod. Just when and how he determined to hold a council is still a mystery.

In organizing the council, Tardini followed the pattern of the curial congregations or offices, gradually employing their prelates and advisers—conservatives to a man—in proposing some seventy schemata for debate and excluding forward-looking cardinals and theologians. Thus the preparatory stages revealed a fundamental split in the church's thinking between the static, juridical theology of the curia and the mindset of prelates who accepted Pope John's challenge to consider the church as the people of God rather than the political entity suggested by the traditional phrase of a "perfect society."

With the exception of the octogenarian Jesuit cardinal, Agostino Bea, charged with a secretariat for Christian unity, and a handful of previously censored theologians, such as Yves Congar, Jean Daniélou, and Henri de Lubac, the curial prelates controlled the organization. But with the providential death of Tardini in July 1961, residential cardinals such as Suenens of Belgium, Léger of Canada, Koenig of Vienna and their advisors gradually took control, reducing the schemata to a manageable seventeen, and suggesting that the council deal with the church *ad intra* and *ad extra*.

Meanwhile an abortive attempt was made by the curia-controlled Lateran seminary to get control of theological teaching in Rome and presumably round the world. This program was inaugurated with an attack on the Jesuit Gregorian University and on the Biblicum that greatly angered the pope. Unperturbed by the intransigence of many of his curial advisors whom he would label "prophets of doom who knew no history," the pope issued a series of documents including the encyclical *Pacem in terris* indicating the direction in which he wanted the council to proceed.

Upon the death of Tardini, Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, prefect of the Congregation of the Holy Office, assumed full charge of the proceedings, eventually turning out to be *l'enfant terrible* of the council. A man of considerable wit and benevolence, he nevertheless considered himself all but omniscient in doctrinal matters.

Tardini had likewise endowed the council with the services of Archbishop Pericle Felici, a brilliant Latinist with a mordant wit who was to function as the council's secretary general, keeping order in the gathering while definitely favoring the conservative faction, a grouping of some 400 prelates whose opposition to the pope's desire for an *aggiornamento* gradually forced the reform-minded cardinals and prelates to undertake a serious participation in the proceedings. Pope John meanwhile played the role of Jacob silently observing the quarreling of his sons. Informed of his incurable cancer, the pope set the date for the opening of the council for September 11, 1962, and rejoiced to preside over its first session.

This is a formidable volume, well-written, slightly repetitious with innumerable footnotes detailing the published *acta* and their commentaries, as well as the diaries, notes, and recollections of numerous participants. While it neglects some of the humorous and bizarre incidents that marked the preconciliar activities, it is a worthy monument to the twentieth century's most startling religious event. □

Francis X. Murphy, C.SS.R., *is the author of numerous books, including* The Papacy Today *(Macmillan).*

MEETING MY NEIGHBORS

East to America
Elaine H. Kim and Eui-Young Yu
The New Press, $25, 408 pp.

Still Life with Rice
A Young American Woman Discovers the Life and Legacy of Her Korean Grandmother
Helie Lee
Scribner, $24, 320 pp.

Heather King

The unfair media portrayal of Korean-Americans as one-dimensional, gun-toting shopowners was just one facet of the devastation wreaked on the community by the 1992 Los Angeles riots. *East to America* grew in part out of a desire to address that stereotype, and it does so with humor, pathos, and commendable candor.

Presenting an array of divergent voices to illustrate the complex cultural, social, and historical factors on which the Korean-American community is based proves a brilliant device, at once educational and entertaining. Part of the beauty of the book is the discovery that there is, of course, no "average" Korean: we meet a gay-rights activist; a lesbian attorney with a Latina lover; an artist/DJ who speaks Spanish better than Korean; a mechanical engineer with a Korean mother and an African-American father; a volunteer grandmother who sews clothing for unwed mothers.

There are ministers, community organizers, a counselor to abused women, grocery-store owners, soldiers, artists, and all kinds of delicious psychocultural tidbits, like the following from Kyung-Ja Lee, a filmmaker: "When Koreans fight over who's going to pay the bill for a meal, it's very sophisticated and complicated....People secretly remember who paid before....I know one guy who never paid. It gets ugly; people feel like killing a guy like that. They get homicidal."

Koreans share a heritage of foreign occupation, political repression, and civil war which Americans of this generation can only imagine. "Basically, our whole

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family got wiped out just like most other families during the Korean War," one interviewee says matter-of-factly. This history goes far toward explaining why, unfairly or not, Koreans are often portrayed as unduly concerned with material security, a perception that the book addresses head-on.

Paul Kim, a twenty-year veteran of the Los Angeles Police Department, says, for example, "Take the typical Korean family. Materially, they may be well-off, but in every other way, they are living in poverty. They have absolutely no life, except working. They have no family life. No recreation, no reflection on anything, no participation in the world, nothing outside of materialistic pursuit, no real sympathy for human beings, whether Korean or not."

While many of the other narratives belie this harsh characterization, the fact is that if this is the typical Korean family, it is also, like it or not, increasingly typical of Americans in general. Kim has held a mirror up to our collective face, and looking at it, I couldn't help but think that the tragedy may not be so much that we don't always get along—which is inevitable when our principal contact consists of competing for a share of the market—but how blindly so many of us have followed, and been disappointed by, the idea that money buys happiness. "[Koreans] built their dream on the unprecedented rise in real estate values in Southern California," says journalist K.W. Lee, who goes on to blame the country for dashing those dreams, as if the recession in the late '80s had been discriminatorily directed toward Koreans alone. The fact is that a lot of other people suffered, too; the emotional effect of the failure of the economy speaks more to me of misplaced dreams across the board than it does of racism.

Material gain, however, is only one of the many factors that motivate this extraordinary group of people, almost all of whom have made sacrifices that border on the superhuman; some of these folk sparked off so much energy I felt I needed rubber shoes to read their stories. Jay Kun Yoo, for example, supported his family from the age of fifteen by working three jobs while simultaneously attending school and evangelizing for his church, taught night classes for the poor while getting a degree in international relations, earned a master's while working as an officer in the Korean Air Force, became student activities coordinator at Seoul's UNESCO office, fled to the United States after the Korean government became suspicious of his activities as a "progressive-minded intellectual," earned a second master's, graduated at the top of his law school class, passed the California bar on his eighth try, and spent the next six years working at minimum legal wage to help exonerate Chol Soo Lee, a Korean unjustly convicted of murdering a fellow prison inmate. I couldn't help but feel it was our loss when Yoo recently moved back to Korea, though as he says, "In the end, it doesn't matter where you are; this world is all God's world."

Helie Lee grew up, thoroughly Americanized, in Los Angeles's San Fernando Valley. Nonetheless, when, at the age of twenty-five, she was not yet married, her Korean mother and grandmother took to calling Lee "rotten fruit." Envious of their cultural pride, and exasperated with her own long-standing repudiation of all things Asian, she impulsively bought a one-way ticket to Seoul and began the search for her history chronicled in *Still Life with Rice*. The book is a first-person re-creation of the life of Lee's maternal grandmother, Hongyong Baek, born in North Korea in 1912.

In those days, couples were connected by a matchmaker, the bride and groom didn't formally meet until the wedding day ("it was great sport for wedding guests to peep through holes they punched in the paper [bedroom] door"), and the woman relinquished her identity and became known henceforth simply as "so-and-so's wife." Nonetheless, Hongyong was the *de facto* head of the family; although she and "Husband" eventually developed true love, he spent most of his time running off to get drunk and fool around with other women.

Meanwhile, she became her mother-in-law's personal slave, as was the custom; raised five children; moved the family to China during the Japanese occupation; made a fortune by smuggling

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opium (Husband got caught and was thrown in jail the one time he tried it); and established a profitable restaurant. The family returned to North Korea at the close of World War II only to experience the Communist seizure of their land and a country shattered by the Korean War. After Husband and Eldest Son (who disappeared for forty years) fled south to relative safety, Hongyong made the harrowing midwinter journey with the four remaining children. Now in her eighties and living in Los Angeles's Koreatown, she practices the healing art of *chiryo*, which promotes healthy blood circulation by slapping and pinching the skin until the bruised patient screams for mercy. Hongyong claims it cures everything from worms to crippled limbs; her patients, whom she treats for free, come from all over the world.

I learned more about Koreans in the time it took to read these two fine books than I have in three years in Koreatown, where I happen to live myself. I propose we all meet at Hongyong's for a bracing *chiryo* session, followed by noodles and *kimchee*. It might not solve everything, but it would be a start. □

Heather King *is a free-lance writer living in Los Angeles.*

OLYMPUS IN ALBANY

The Flaming Corsage
William Kennedy
Viking, $23.95, 209 pp.

Daniel M. Murtaugh

Readers new to William Kennedy may know that his previous novels constitute a developing Faulknerian saga of Albany, New York. They may wonder whether this sixth in the series is a good place to jump in. It is. It is a gorgeously written story that stands well on its own even as it invites the reader into the other novels. For those who have read the others, particularly those dealing with the Phelan family (*Billy Phelan's Greatest Game*, *Ironweed*, and *Very Old Bones*), there is the added pleasure of recognition and deepened perspective.

The Phelan novels are set in the 1930s and 1950s, but they hark back to events just before the turn of the century, when Francis Phelan, an eighteen-year-old with a major-league pitching arm and a streak of stubborn heroism, is seduced, virtually plucked from a tree in his backyard, by his imperiously beautiful and mad neighbor, Katrina Daugherty. She is the wife of Edward Daugherty, a playwright of swelling reputation who, in a different way, also appropriated Francis when he used him as a model for a character in his first play.

The Daughertys are like pagan gods to the Phelans, baffling their simple Catholic piety. Katrina, in particular, infects Francis with a morbid sexuality born of her febrile reading of Baudelaire and Verlaine. The affair precipitates an explosive scene in the Phelan household and the first of a series of estrangements that turns Francis into a failed father and a homeless bum.

The first-time reader of Kennedy will only guess at this from the pages of *The Flaming Corsage*, and this is a part of its meaning. In this novel we seem at times to inhabit the realm of the gods where the affairs of mortals like the Phelans are largely covered over with an Olympian disregard. The comparison with classical mythology—for example, the interactions of Zeus, Hera, and Aphrodite with Odysseus, Achilles, and Hector—can be pursued in more detail. The Greek gods depend on the mortals to give interest to their lives which, because they cannot end, lack drama and pathos. So they descend to earth from time to time, make love with mortals, incite wars among them, and otherwise set in motion chains of consequence which they ultimately ignore as the mortals cannot. For the mortals, for the Phelans in this instance, these consequences are their fates.

In *The Flaming Corsage*, privileged mortals aspire to a godlike superiority to fate, a fate that is defined genealogically, for we are all bound by our family histories. Tricked by the accidents of fortunate birth, superior education, and enlarged imagination, Edward and Katrina are tempted to believe that they can step outside of the matrix of destiny. In marrying, they insult both their heritages. He is descended from despised Irish laborers who dug the Erie Canal. She is descended on her mother's side from New York Dutch aristocracy and on her father's side from Oliver Cromwell himself, the nemesis of Ireland who, between 1641 and 1652, gave glory to God by destroying more than half its population.

Edward attempts to set all this right, to transcend history for the sake of his love for Katrina, in a grand gesture of hubris that ends in fiery disaster. In 1894, some eight years after their marriage, he invites Katrina's still unreconciled parents and her sister to a lavish dinner at Albany's Delavan Hotel. Just when he seems to have won them over with the extravagant gifts of a sealskin coat and a thoroughbred racing horse, the hotel catches fire. Although they escape, largely through Edward's heroism,

"This should be good—here comes her husband!"

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the fire will eventually cost the lives of Katrina's father and sister. It will also pierce Katrina's breast with the flaming corsage of the title, a burning stick hurled from an exploding elevator shaft. The scar that she bears for the rest of her life expresses her conviction that Edward killed her father and sister. More specifically, they were victims of the hot fatality of his love in which she was complicit. All this was prefigured in her courtship dream of him as a blue panther leaping out of her kitchen breadbox, and in the impulse that led her to offer her virginity to him in a graveyard.

In the long slow death of love that marks their enduring marriage, Katrina's beauty and distinction become all the more marked, and Edward becomes ensnared in an affair with an ambitious young actress and a sordid chain of practical jokes that ends in a scandalous "love-nest" murder-suicide. It is not necessary to give all the details of this counter-plot here, but two of its features should be noted. One is the consistent role of Thomas Maginn, a lank, cynical Pandarus poisoned by jealousy of Edward's success with women, who begins and ends the novel proposing to Edward that the hired favors of prostitutes exhaust the mystery of love. The other is the continuing relevance of the Olympian analogy that I suggested earlier. The gods of Homer, Virgil, and Ovid are essentially cruel and trivial beings, incapable of loyalty or honest affection. The freedom granted by their immortality is a solvent to these and most of the other moral qualities that we value in humans. Albany's high society in the gilded age has much the same effect. Edward's friends show none of the solid virtues that we (and Katrina) recognize in his parents. Nor does Edward in the company of those friends. That leads to the love-nest scandal.

With an arresting achronology, that scandal, in 1908, is presented to us in the novel's first pages, in the flat objectivity of a tabloid news story that does not even name the principals. In dropping back to 1885 in the second chapter, the novel sets itself the task of humanizing that grotesquely reductive opening text. Tabloid flash-forwards signal later narrative turning points as well. (It helps that most chapter headings include dates.) In each of these disruptions, an enigmatic recapitulation serves the reader as a premonition. I was reminded of the use of newsreels to advance the story of *Citizen Kane*. There is the same sort of juxtaposition of narrative textures, journalistic versus fictional, the implication being that the weight of truth falls somewhere between perceived act and reconstructed intention.

The novel's finest achievement is the character of Katrina. She is irresistible. The fact that we can diagnose her madness early on simply gives no defense against her allure, and it offers no key to the irreducible mystery of character that brings her to life. Kennedy has been plausibly but (I think) inaccurately criticized as a macho novelist. Katrina settles that question in his favor. □

Daniel M. Murtaugh, *a long-time* Commonweal *contributor, teaches in the English department at Florida Atlantic University.*

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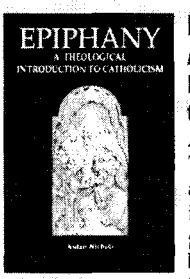

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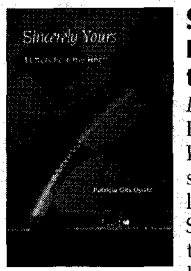

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American Exceptionalism
A Double-Edged Sword
Seymour Martin Lipset
W. W. Norton & Co., $27.50, 352 pp.

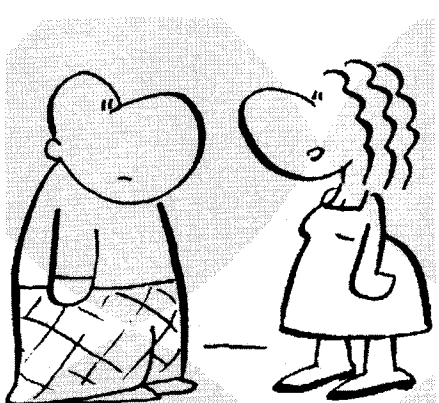
The Rise of the Imperial Self
America's Culture Wars in Augustinian Perspective
Ronald William Dworkin
Rowman & Littlefield, $21, 245 pp.

Thomas Massaro

There is no dearth of opinions about what ails the United States today. Everyone seems to have a diagnosis as well as a prescription for our reputed moral decline. However, new books by political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset and by legal scholar Ronald Dworkin go beyond merely expounding a set of predetermined conclusions or recommendations and provide readers with analytic tools for use in the assessment of American political culture.

Lipset's title gives a reliable indication of the central thesis of this work, which proceeds in continuity, with a well-developed body of social science literature to which Lipset himself has been a major contributor. The United States is different from other countries because it is founded upon a national creed rather than upon the social bonds of ethnicity and history that normally cement peoples together. Our national sense of self is derived from a broadly shared ideology which includes commitment to liberty, equality, populism, individualism, and antistatism. This consensus does not, of course, eliminate all conflict, but it does constrict considerably the range of mainstream opinion to one or another form of liberalism (in the classical sense of the word). From these same cultural roots stem both faces of U.S. distinctiveness: the laudable (voluntarism, individual initiative, personal responsibility) and lamentable (self-serving behavior, atomism, disregard for the common good).

Lipset takes seriously the adage: "to know only one culture is to know none." Group traits are best highlighted by observing patterns of variation and contrast. This insight serves as an organizing principle of his book, which includes chapters comparing the political culture of the United States with that of our closest kin, Canada, and of our fellow misfit (or "outlier" in terms of social indicators) in the international community, Japan. Lipset's analysis of distinctive U.S. social, political, economic, and historical factors succinctly recapitulates the classic debate (started by Marx and Engels) over the surprising underdevelopment of class consciousness and socialist movements in the United States. Lipset joins such commentators as Louis Hartz, Richard Hofstadter, and Michael Harrington in seeing Americanism (the ideology of success that posits the existence of unrestricted opportunity) as, in effect, a substitute for socialism in the U.S. context. This phenomenon renders the American experience qualitatively different from the consciousness of limited opportunity and political power that prevails in other industrialized societies.



"I wouldn't mind your ego trips so much if you didn't always bring your id along."

Lipset's use of contrast is not limited to cross-national comparison. Nearly half the book is devoted to "exceptions to exceptionalism," social groups within American society which have undergone experiences at variance from the national mainstream. Lipset chooses three: American Jews (who are notable for how their unusual material success remains coupled with an abiding commitment to social equality), African-Americans (whose marginalization is linked to a greater openness to such group-oriented solutions as affirmative action), and intellectuals (who are more likely to embrace leftist approaches because of their alienation from market-driven populist society). In all three cases, deviation from the U.S. norm sheds much useful light on the inner logic of the distinctive American ideology. Lipset's portrayals allow the reader a revealing glimpse of why our polity is capable of engaging simultaneously in noble attempts to institutionalize virtue or to impose an often intolerant, crusading moralism while we hold fast to a construal of meritocracy which fosters a ruthless instrumental pursuit of material success that is largely indifferent to social decay.

Ronald Dworkin's *The Rise of the Imperial Self* also interprets current American culture by means of a comparative technique. While Lipset contrasts late-twentieth-century America as a whole with other modern nations, Dworkin measures the dominant character type in America today (the "imperial self" or "expressive individualist") against ideal typical personas in various civilizations at key moments in their development: the crumbling Roman empire of Augustine, medieval European aristocratic society, Tocqueville's America, and the United States of the 1950s "organization man." The most intriguing aspect of Dworkin's project is how useful the categories of Augustinian psychology turn out to be in analyzing the ethos of diverse societies throughout history.

Dworkin is quite successful in substantiating his claim that "there is noth-

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ing new under the sun." We can use to great advantage Augustine's notions about true peace, detachment, time horizon, self-love, and faith in the transcendent to sort out the struggles of democracy and aristocracy or postmodernism and the therapeutic ethos, just as the author of the *City of God* did in defending orthodox Christianity against Manicheism, Donatism, Platonism, and Gnosticism. Even our current "culture wars" have been played out before, albeit in proxy form.

Intriguingly, Dworkin's argument can be interpreted as a refutation of those (such as Lipset) who contend that there is something truly new and exceptional about America. In fact, the early American character described by Tocqueville with such admiration was separated from its aristocratic forebears of the *ancien régime* by three psychological factors (the republican principle, the force of public opinion, and the salience of Christian faith) which, Dworkin observes, have proven fragile amidst the vicissitudes of late modernity. Once these sources of virtue and restraint are stripped away, the American character reveals its true self, hidden like a recessive gene. The imperial self which emerges is once again aristocratic and self-aggrandizing in nature. Barricaded in "lifestyle enclaves" against the imagined threats of any truly public life, this expressive individualist dissipates himself in pursuit of empty self-fulfillment, devoid of the transcendent principles which guided the lives of his ancestors. Tocquevillian virtue was a mere blip on the time-line.

Dworkin's analysis thus lends itself to a thoroughly pessimistic construal of the prospects of American life. No type of deliverance is possible because, as imperial selves, we engage in a systematic refusal to acknowledge dependence on the transcendent. We condemn ourselves to disappointment, so Dworkin hardly needs to utter an explicit word of judgment. Lipset, by contrast, carefully probes America's cultural inheritance in hope of discovering strategies to accentuate the virtuous face of the double-edged sword. His guarded optimism for America's moral future is bounded by the realization that we cannot escape the legacy of our established political culture. The communitarian approaches that appeal to many today are unlikely to take root in this liberty-loving soil. Realistic hopes for ameliorization rest with the development of a "moral individualism" consistent with dominant American values, but prescinding from the self-interested atomism which characterizes America in its worst moments. The distinctive American ethos is flexible, though not infinitely so.

While it might be possible to quibble with either Lipset or Dworkin for insufficient attention to the nuances of how religion and pluriform moral languages shape American public life, both books make sound contributions to our understanding of American political culture. □

Thomas Massaro, S.J., *is a Ph.D. candidate in Christian social ethics at Emory University in Atlanta.*

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The International Style
Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, with a new foreword by Philip Johnson
W. W. Norton & Company, $27.50, 260 pp.

Living Machines
E. Michael Jones
Ignatius Press, $11.95, 136 pp.

Christopher Thomas

Late last year, while prowling in a Catholic bookstore, my eye was caught by a book title—E. Michael Jones's *Living Machines: Bauhaus Architecture as Sexual Ideology*. The book seemed to have a promising thesis: that the dream of a new architecture promulgated by modernist architects in Europe after World War I was founded on a complete and rather stupid disrespect for tradition, particularly that of the integrity of the family. Now here, I thought, were a daring author and publisher and a provocative argument: that architectural Modernism has been not just an aesthetic failure—how boring it often looks—but an ethical one. I confess to being tired of art history that is unfailingly even-handed and detached, and here I caught the scent of blood. However, as I guess I should have expected, the book turns out to be really rather wonky—too bad because the argument, if it were made in a subtle, knowing way, could, I think, be thought-provoking and important.

The story of what critic Nikolaus Pevsner christened the "Modern Movement" goes back to just before World War I. Between about 1912 and 1927 a new look in leading-edge design appeared which has reshaped the way our century lives and our material environment looks. "[T]here exists today a modern style as original, as consistent, as logical, and as widely distributed as any in the past," wrote Alfred H. Barr, Jr., director of the new Museum of Modern Art in New York, heralding the landmark 1932 exhibition called *The International Style*. The principal book under review here is a new edition of the one that was written to accompany that show. The authors were a pair of young, overprivileged, and rather preachy and aesthetic friends of Barr's who went on to distinguished careers, Hitchcock as a scholar and Johnson as an architect (he is still alive and making a mark). The book was designed to expose "backward" Americans to the radically stripped, futuristic architecture built in Europe and some corners of America in the preceding decade. The authors' heroes were J.J.P. Oud of Holland; Walter Gropius, creator of the Bauhaus in Germany; Mies van der Rohe; and Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, better-known as Le Corbusier—all of whom, except for Oud and with the addition of Frank Lloyd Wright, are still considered *the* modern masters. In other words, to a great degree Hitchcock and Johnson wrote the history we still tell about modern architecture.

With a puritanical, missionary zeal, the authors argued that the pale, cubistic, minimalist architecture of new housing-settlements and recreation clubs, which looked so strange beside the Beaux-Arts Classical courthouses and Colonial Revival residences Americans were accustomed to, heralded the advent of a universal style for the twentieth century, the equal of Graeco-Roman classicism, Romanesque, and Gothic. Barr and the authors christened the austere new look the "International Style," a label that has stuck. Claiming only to describe the style, they were (as they themselves later admitted) actually prescribing it, an aim in which they were largely successful until the 1950s.

The book's reissue marks more than a jubilee or nostalgia: it is a sign of the return to favor, after being held in disdain for about twenty years by "Postmodernists," of sharply antitraditional modes of design harking back to those of the 1920s and '30s. So the subtext is about design today, *not* outlandish-looking villas and housing colonies then. Charles Jencks, the taxonomist of late twentieth-century architecture, calls the new look "Neomodernism," and signs of it are everywhere—suggesting that "Postmodernism," like "Postcommunism," may be too hopeful a term. Neomodernism is seen in the current penchant for exposed steel I-beams, glass-and-steel canopies at street- and roofline, and modernistic, slightly punky décor, with lots of exposed wire and metal, glass bricks, unmolded cherry-hued hardwood, lean tracklighting with tiny bulbs, and attenuated leather-and-metal furniture. Prominent in fashionable coffee-bars, the look is both retrospective and coolly, elegantly "now," like a Chanel suit or handbag. For my part I am tempted to call it "Millennial Modernism"—architecture for the age of CD-ROM, the Internet, and cellular telephones.

The new designers and theorists, whose utopia looks like the sets of *Batman Forever*, will find much to admire and emulate in Hitchcock's and Johnson's text and dated black-and-white photos, with their intimations of a precision-engineered future. Perhaps we who scoffed at the book only twelve or fifteen years ago, when all the talk in architecture was of comfort and tradition, were blind to its considerable virtues. The text, written by Hitchcock, is pellucid. Based on car tours of Europe, the text and photos documented examples of the radical architecture that had sprung up since 1922. These include such now-familiar icons of modern design as the Bauhaus at Dessau, Germany; Mies's Tugendhat House at Brno, Czechoslovakia; his glass-and-marble pavilion at the Barcelona exposition of 1929; and Le Corbusier's Villa Savoie at Poissy, France, of 1930. But the authors also presented principles, arguing that the new architecture was more than a flash in the pan; rather it was the harbinger

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of an organic style for the times. (Only five years later, with architectural modernism turned back by European dictators and American millionaires, they might not have been so hopeful.)

The principles of the new architecture, noted Hitchcock, "are few and broad....There is, first, a new conception of architecture as volume rather than as mass." This was to reflect the modern reality of the building as a cagework of steel or concrete with walls that were mere screens or membranes—"curtain-walls." Second, to assert the primacy of plan and function over *a priori* notions of style and avoid the determined symmetry of the previous generation of Beaux-Arts design, "regularity rather than axial symmetry serves as the chief means of ordering design." His third principle "proscrib[ed] arbitrary, applied decoration," substituting for it skilled handling of proportions and frank but expressive architectural detail dictated by need. Yet, to rescue a place in the new age for the architect as artist and man of taste, Hitchcock insisted that the good designer did not employ these principles mechanically, but with tact and sensitivity; and herein, I think, lies the subtlety of his argument. He, Barr, and Johnson—in keeping with the new MOMA's mission—were seeking a *via media* between the bald functionalism of sociologists and engineers, for whom aesthetics meant nothing beside the urgent need for decent housing, and, at the opposite extreme, the formalism of traditionalist architects who believed that meaning and legibility in design demanded reference to the Western humanist past. Anyone who has been awake at all in the past decade will sense the resonance of their quite balanced, and in retrospect admirable, argument for our present situation.

The International Style and the example of the new European architecture caused the new style to sweep America by about 1939–41. The process was hastened by the arrival here of several of the modern masters, forced out of Europe by Hitler. Both Gropius and Mies came in 1937 and directed influential American architectural schools until the 1950s. Accordingly, their attitudes were dominant when the war ended. Only Wright really demurred, and by the mid-thirties even his architecture—for instance, Fallingwater, the Kaufmann house in western Pennsylvania, of 1935—was nodding to the International Style.

As with so many phenomena, though, the style's ascendancy contained the seeds of its demise. By the late forties the austere, "honest" architecture Hitchcock and Johnson had celebrated fifteen years before had come to look, frankly, boring, especially in showy, materialist America. Was it for this world of white stucco housing settlements, with nary a trace of ornament and small shopping and community centers, that Allied soldiers and millions of others had died? Even during the war, progressive architects had started calling for a "New Monumentality" in design, which the small, unselfconscious, often left-wing work of the Modernists in the

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1920s and '30s could never deliver. Instead, some architects began to look to the powerful and expressive, even primitive, work that Le Corbusier had explored in wartime seclusion in southern France and with which he burst back on the scene when the war ended, especially his Unité d'Habitation at Marseilles, of 1946–52. By the fifties, architects and their clients, especially in the United States,were seeking modes more expansive and expressive than the prosaic International Style of the interwar period.

So began what has been called Late Modernism, a phase that Hitchcock himself coined in his essay of 1951 on "The International Style Twenty Years After," which appears as an appendix here. Embarrassed at the narrowness of his earlier views and willing to tolerate greater stylistic latitude, he predicted that architecture would continue to flow in the stream channeled by the "high" modernism of the 1920s and '30s but said, "I suspect we are entering the 'late' phase." For a time architecture seemed to bear him out. The swooping roofs and decorative patterned grilles employed in the late fifties by architects like Minoru Yamasaki, Edward Durrell Stone, and, yes, Philip Johnson himself—who, in the new preface, calls himself a "jumper-arounder"—looked like baroque variations on the old purist themes.

By the 1960s, however, younger architects were in full revolt against what they considered the rigidity and heaviness into which orthodox Modernism had fallen. A rupture occurred. The key event, says art historian Vincent Scully, was the appearance in 1966 of Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, in which, aping the smug, aphoristic style of the High Modernists but turning their aphorisms on their heads, Venturi proclaimed "Less is a bore" and "form evokes function." His ironic play on received architectural pieties, which parallels the parody of the "organization man" and "military-industrial complex" in the Vietnam years, ushered in "Postmodernism." Architects like Venturi and fellow Yalies, Charles Moore and Robert Stern, without denying their place as heirs to the powerful tradition of Modernism, sought to create a complex, multilayered, often witty architecture in which traditional, especially classical, elements appeared, transformed and out of scale. At their worst such designs were what Moshe Safdie called "private jokes in public places," but at its best the movement fostered renewed appreciation for the Renaissance, Mannerist, Baroque, and Neoclassical architectural traditions. The late seventies saw a kind of High Postmodernism in which—for a pertinent example—Johnson's AT&T Building in Manhattan, of 1978, alluded to several kinds of tradition, with its grand, thirties-ish elevator lobby, its subtly articulated shaft of office stories, and its memorable crest after that of a Chippendale highboy.

It is this mood of retrospection or continuity with the past against which the Neomodernism of the late eighties and the nineties has reacted. Neomodernism also evokes a past—that of the visionary High Modernism of the early twentieth century—making it in effect a Postmodern Modernism. The reaction was evident by 1988, when the MOMA, not to be left behind, staged the show *Deconstructivism*, which Johnson himself organized to celebrate (his own work and) the quite extreme direction being taken toward themes of collision, contradiction, and random chaos by architects like Peter Eisenmann. Architecture since 1990 seems generally tamer than this, replaced by more earnest, sober-sides, and thus buildable "Neo-Modernism," but without doubt the neotraditionalism of the '70s and '80s has waned among the avant-garde.

While admiring the sleek beauty of the current work, I am not in total sympathy with this resurgence of Neomod, which I find, at its worst, bone-chilling, like green hair and blue lipstick or suicide committed in style. Like E. Michael Jones, I feel it harbors deep nihilism—hardly the mood for the millennium. I want to protest, "Haven't we seen and done all this before? Must we fetishize the New and go in search of it again and again?" It seems we must, and the new edition of Hitchcock's and Johnson's book, good as it is, just when we thought it was dead and buried, is a sign of that. □

Christopher Thomas *teaches in the Department of History of Art at the University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.*

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(Continued from page 4)

What I hoped to communicate was what I think McGreevy did: that the old ethnic parish was a mixed blessing—a powerfully effective instrument of community, cohesion, and development, but also, more often than not, an incubator of racist, xenophobic, un-Christian attitudes and behaviors. To acknowledge the negative aspects is not in any way to deny the positive. Rather, it is simply to acknowledge that life is complex, and seldom more so than when dealing with matters of race and religion.

DON WYCLIFF

It wasn't a myth

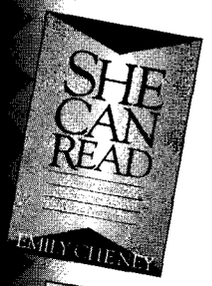
James Uebbing provided *Commonweal* with an unbelievably bad review [July 12] of James Carroll's memoir, *An American Requiem*. For one thing, the reviewer simply misreads the book. Carroll is not justifying himself over against his father; he never suggested "that the White House can give us justice and that the Vatican can give us God"; and his recollections of youthful experiences are tinged less with righteousness than with irony, doubt, and regret.

Carroll explains—convincingly, I think—how time, and love, have purged his memory of anger. He knows as well as Uebbing that things did not turn out as he had hoped, but he is not in the least ashamed of those hopes, nor should he be. And he knows now that his powerful father, on the other side of so many barriers neither created, also hoped, with at least comparable nobility, and also knew disappointment. And James Carroll can tell their story so well because he loved his father and because he knows now that both of them tried, as best they could, to act responsibly. In the end, Carroll's memoir is about the love of country that father and son shared; this was the love that did them in.

Uebbing hasn't a clue about such things. He writes as he does because, he says, Carroll is a "good specimen" of a "type" from the sixties, people who got caught up in "the myth of liberation." Uebbing, admittedly not of that generation, is wiser. "Liberation," he tells us, "is usually conceived of as liberation from the past, but the past will always persist and organized attempts to overthrow it fail at a very high price." So much for the sixties, for the civil rights movement, the peace movement, and the renewal of Catholicism, those "pacifist, ecumenist, and modernist enthusiasms" which supposedly led James Carroll to his "tragic" failure, his "delusion or self-deception."

In fact, of course, what Uebbing calls the myth of liberation was nothing more than a sense of personal responsibility. Imbedded in the reviewer's cynical remarks is the conviction that, in most important things, no one is responsible. Joe Carroll and his son James walked different paths,

Strategies and Subversions



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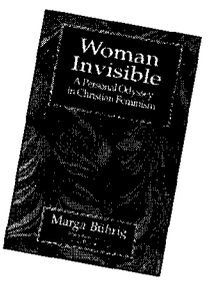

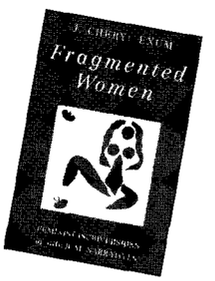

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the one inspired by J. Edgar Hoover and World War II, the other by John XXIII and John F. Kennedy. Their choices, made in both cases at considerable personal sacrifice, arose from what used to be called civic virtue: care, grounded in justice and love, for the good, especially the moral good, of one's community. Uebbing knows this is silly. He tells us that James Carroll lacks "imagination," that his writing becomes "depressing," because he once thought that something better might lie "just over the crest of the hill."

Carroll did believe that, so he quite properly ends his memoir in sadness. But it's worse than he thought, for there probably are people out there who agree with James Uebbing that the only thing over the hill is more of the same. From such convictions come bad reviews and, unfortunately, many other bad things. DAVID J. O'BRIEN

Worcester, Mass.

The writer is Loyola Professor of Roman Catholic Studies at the College of the Holy Cross.

The reviewer replies:

I am sorry that David O'Brien found such disappointment in my misreading of *An American Requiem* that he felt compelled to construct a misreading of his own. For the simple fact is that we seem to be in close accord. I allowed in my review that Carroll's story was sad, and I quite agree that his narration was tinged with irony, doubt, and regret. It ought to have been. It was, after all, an account of how he lost faith in himself, his father, his country, and his church over impulses and ideas that seem to have lost much of their edge in the intervening years.

No doubt there were many who felt as Carroll (and, I assume, O'Brien) did in those days. No doubt, too, that many are as capable as Carroll of irony and regret in their more recollected moments. They are not thereby to be exempted from historical scrutiny, however, when they sit down and write of historical events, and it is foolish to imply otherwise. Carroll, I am quite sure, would expect no such allowance. JAMES J. UEBBING

A genre mistake?

David McCabe writes interestingly on matters philosophical and I have appreciated his book reviews in the recent past. But I cannot let his astonishing swipe at C.S. Lewis go unanswered [review, June 14]. He spanks me as well but that is rather less important than his description of that masterwork of Christian apologetics, *The Screwtape Letters*, as "vitriolic." It is painful to read this characterization of a work so canny and so deftly written. The *Letters* are, if I may say so, diabolically clever.

I wonder if McCabe is sufficiently attuned to the claims of various genres. This may account, as well, for his misreading of my "Newtape File" in the *Seedbeds of Virtue* collection edited by Mary Ann Glendon and David Blankenhorn. I was, first of all, given the assignment of trying to do a "Screwtape" turn with contemporary American society as the launching point. This proved fertile ground. But I did not—repeat, did not—"suggest that Woody Allen, Madonna, and Jean Paul Sartre are agents of Satan." Oh, no, it's far more interesting than that. My point was that moral obtuseness, promoting a kind of numbness about moral questions, feeds a flatness of being and an inversion of the moral universe of the sort that fuels giddiness in the nether world.

McCabe's literalness evidently prevents him from seeing how satire works. When Woody Allen argued in all sincerity that "the heart has its reasons," thereby refusing to see any interesting ethical dilemma in bedding the seventeen-year-old adopted daughter of his longtime romantic partner, he deepened our moral numbness. When Madonna equates "express yourself" as licensing untrammeled freedom to do whatever you want whenever you want to, at least in front of the camera, that, too, habituates her legions of fans to a flat, morally empty notion of human possibility.

I forget why I went after Sartre, but given his general bloodymindedness on such matters as gulags and the edifying spectacle of shedding blood in any cause he deemed revolutionarily correct, he seems a pretty good candidate for the moral flatness school.

Fortunately, most of the people who have taken time to write me about the "Newtape File" appreciated the humor and the strangeness of the morally inverted universe of which Newtape is an avatar. Too bad Professor McCabe wasn't one of them. Maybe next time!

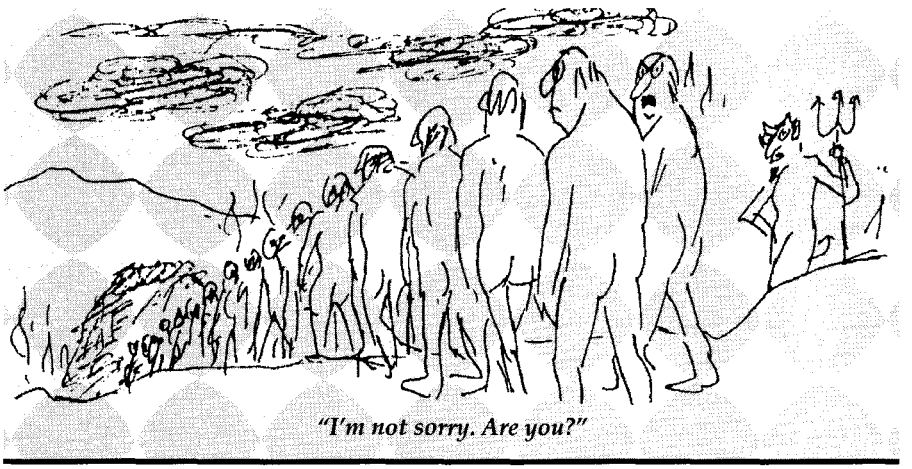
JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN

Nashville, Tenn.

The writer is Laura Spelman Rockefeller Professor of Social and Political Ethics at the University of Chicago.

The reviewer replies:

I am surprised that what was literally a parenthetical remark should have generated such a lengthy response from Professor Elshtain (whose work I have had the pleasure of reading and reviewing), but perhaps the following



"I'm not sorry. Are you?"

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may clear up some confusion:

First, my *American Heritage* defines vitriolic as "bitterly scathing; caustic." This seems to me an apt term to describe the combination of bilious malice and blistering critique that characterizes Screwtape's letters. To say this, of course, is not to claim that Lewis himself was given to vitriol, but it's instructive that upon completing the book Lewis acknowledged how happy he was to escape the perspective of Screwtape. Nor would I have thought that the *Letters'* being canny, deftly written, and clever precluded their being vitriolic as well.

So much for word choice. As for Woody Allen et al.: Newtape is an underling in Hell whose mission is to corrupt humanity. Thus when he refers to Sartre as "our ally" and to Woody Allen as "our Old Nickian ally," and when he embraces Madonna as "our Devilkin" and a "prime candidate for demonification," declaring that "she has gone beyond even my instructions," what other conclusion can be reached, within the universe Professor Elshtain has created, than that the three are in some sense (metaphorical or otherwise) agents for the work of the Devil? Perhaps the piece also serves to dramatize our "moral obtuseness," "moral flatness," and "inversion of the moral universe," but exploration of these rich questions would have required analysis far lengthier than the editors allotted.

Overall, Professor Elshtain appears to believe that I have failed to understand what she had in mind with her piece. That is quite possible—other than the piece itself I have no way of knowing what she had in mind, so I confined my brief comment to what I regarded as its outstanding feature. It struck me upon first reading, and does so still, as an occasionally clever and amusing screed that too frequently scores rhetorical points off our culture's easiest targets. (Does anyone really doubt that Allen is merely rationalizing his own moral turpitude, or that Madonna is anything other than a savvy promoter of her own product?) Readers who've come this far should simply turn to the piece itself and reach their own judgments. DAVID McCABE

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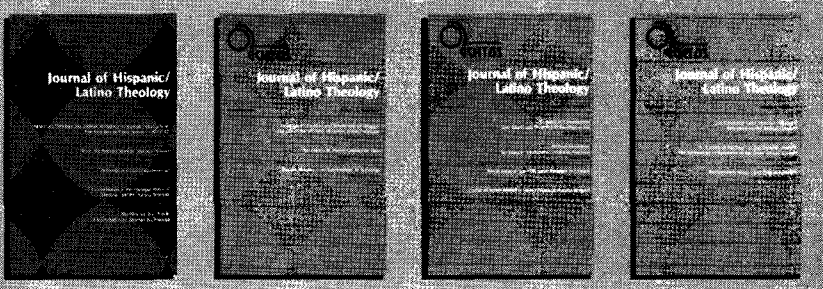

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A VERY HIGH POP-UP

David Y. Todd

Tim Wakefield, six-foot-two, two-hundred-and-six pounds, is pitching for the Red Sox. He delivers the ball to a Seattle Mariner, I can't tell who, and the batter pops it up, a high floater to center field. The outfielder—I consult my program again, it's Milt Cuyler—positions himself and waits. It is a cool, clear evening in Boston's Fenway Park, and I am watching from the right-field bleachers. I don't play baseball.

Once, when I was ten, I did toss a ball with my neighbor, Steve Coughlan, now a surgeon in New Jersey. We were standing at opposite ends of his back yard when Steve got the idea that we should throw the ball as high as we could to simulate catching actual fly balls. I was the first to throw and launched one that reached the height of the elm trees edging the yard. When it dropped, Steve caught and then threw it back toward me, harder, higher. The ball peaked well above the trees and then began to fall. I can still remember the feeling of standing there, looking up, my new glove open, and the ball falling, falling forever it seemed, and then suddenly glancing off the glove before crashing into my eye bone and hitting the ground.

Steve walked over. He was a quiet boy, not prone to offer sympathy, even for pain he had caused. He stood by respectfully while I knelt, holding my head but not crying. The pain astounded me. Steve said he was sorry, and that he had heard the ball from his end of the yard when it hit my face.

His toss that day knocked out, for many years to come, whatever obligation I'd felt to appreciate baseball. I have since made a separate peace with the sport, even attend a couple of games a year now, a novel in my pocket. But as I sit in the bleachers this cool New England evening, I still wonder how players like Milt Cuyler can catch those towering pop-ups. I wait to see if he is really going to catch this one.

In 1986, the night the Red Sox nearly won the World Series against the Mets, I was dancing with three women at a party in Boston. In the kitchen, we four could hear sixty voices in the living room screaming at the television as the ball, we later learned, went between Bill Buckner's legs. Until then, the Sox had been on the way to winning their first world championship since 1918. Steve, who is a Mets fan, later showed me Buckner's error, as recorded on his VCR. It occurs in the tenth inning of the sixth game. Boston is leading three games to two and is only one out away from winning the series. But with two outs and none on, the Mets suddenly rally for two runs and tie the score. Then the Mets batter (Mookie Wilson) hits a ground ball toward first base. Buckner bends to scoop the skipping ball but somehow misses it, and another Met races home to win the game. Steve presses the rewind button, then replays the scene, again and again, to watch the ball roll back, then forward, then back and forward again, through Buckner's legs.

"Then they all yelled 'kill the ump.' That was the last thing I remembered."

Steve laughs and laughs. (I have heard some Red Sox fans deny that the team lost the series on that play, since the Sox could have won the next game. But they didn't win the next game. The momentum had changed.)

This particular evening, however, with an appreciation born of that loss and the earlier pain to my right eye, I watch Milt Cuyler move left, then right, then two short steps forward to meet the ball. Any reasonably coordinated adult who has ever failed to catch a fly must respect such a player's task—as wind or bad luck may twist a ball's movement at any moment—and appreciate his performance as he adjusts and holds ready. We admire him because there is always the possibility that, despite the routine nature of the play, he will misjudge the ball, cramp, slip, suffer a stroke. Cuyler being human and this being baseball, there is the chance that he will fail to make the catch.

As I watch the ball crest and finally begin to descend, I sense the crowd go silent, the other players momentarily halt. But Cuyler doesn't fail. He catches the ball, then throws it back to the shortstop, who tosses it to the second baseman, who relays it on to third before it is tossed back to the pitcher. They all seem to want to touch the ball, a ritual practice to make it somehow right before it is pitched again.

Another Mariner hitter enters the batter's box. Now Wakefield bends forward, and the ball is turning slowly in his fingers behind his back as he and the crouching catcher look at one another. I settle back, take another look at Cuyler, then breathe in the sweet evening air of Fenway Park. □

David Y. Todd *has written for the* Boston Sunday Globe *and the* Paris Review, *among other journals. He teaches at the College of Charleston in Charleston, South Carolina.*

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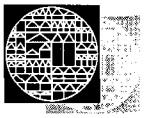

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